NEPAL

Nearly 20 attacks on schools that served as polling centers were reported during Nepal’s 2017 local, regional, and national elections. Attacks on higher education were also reported in 2017 in relation to contested student union elections, and again in 2019 related to various campus and national higher education policies.

Context

Since the end of the ten-year conflict between a Maoist insurgency and the Nepalese government in 2006, Nepal has experienced periodic unrest. One non-state armed group was active during the reporting period - a Maoist splinter party, the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M), led by Netra Bikram Chand, also known as “Biplav”.

The CPN-M was accused of detonating hundreds of explosives at political rallies during the 2017 elections and perpetrating other bombings in subsequent years, often targeting corporations and government. For example, on May 26, 2019, CPN-M was suspected of carrying out three explosions that killed four and injured seven, including some of the group’s own members, in Kathmandu, during a nationwide political protest called for by the Maoist group. The government banned and designated the Biplav-led CPN-M as a criminal group in March 2019.

In 2017, Nepal held elections for the national parliament, provincial assemblies and local governments. While the elections were deemed free and fair by most observers, international media outlets collected reports of explosive devices in polling centers, many of which were in schools, as well as attacks on politicians and civilians, during the election campaigns. In 2015, during the process of ratifying the constitution that preceded the elections, at least 45 people died in violent clashes.

During the 2017-2019 reporting period, CPN-M called for general strikes that impacted education. For example, on March 14, 2019, a general strike led to the closure of almost all schools in the country, affecting over eight million school and college students, according to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, as reported by My Republica.

Clause 7(8) of Nepal’s 2018 Children’s Act, groups that call strikes, or disrupt, or attack education, can be subjected to legal action.

Education under Attack 2018 did not profile Nepal, so no comparisons to previous reporting periods can be made.

Attacks on schools

Between 2017 and 2019, GCPEA collected at least 25 reported incidents of attacks on schools in Nepal. Although not profiled in Education under Attack 2018, at least five attacks on education occurred in Nepal between 2013-2017. Systematic, targeted attacks on schools occurred in 2017 during national and local elections, during which schools were used as polling centers.

Between February and December 2017, GCPEA collected 21 reports of attacks on schools, 14 of which occurred in November and December, during parliamentary and state assembly polls, five occurred in relation to local elections in May and June 2017, and another two took place in the Terai region. These attacks primarily involved the detonation or discovery of explosive devices at or near schools used as polling centers. Some examples included:

- On June 26, 2017, local media reported that one explosive device was discovered and defused near a polling center at Jana Prakash Higher Secondary School in Budhidanda, Province No. 1, according to local media.

- On June 27, one bomb reportedly exploded, and another was defused, at a polling center located in Singhabahini Secondary School in Laliguras, Province No. 1, according to local media sources. No casualties were reported, and no group took responsibility for the attack.

- Local media reported that armed assailants launched a grenade and rocks at election officials at a school in Kalika, Karnali Province, on November 23, 2017. No casualties or injuries were reported and no group took responsibility for the incident.

- On November 25, 2017, one day before elections, a bomb detonated in front of Bhanujan Secondary School Taleju, Province No. 1, disrupting polling preparations, according to reports received by local media.
Four bombings reportedly occurred at or near polling centers in Bajhang district, Sudurpashchim Province, on November 26, 2017. One took place at Janata Adharbuht School in Chabis Pathibhara; no casualties were reported and no group took responsibility for the attack, according to local media sources. Similar incidents were reported near Thalara Primary School in Thalara, at Satyabadi Higher Secondary School in Satyabadi, and at Kanya Secondary School in Bungal.

An explosive device reportedly went off at a polling station in the Divyajyoti Adharbhuht School in Devchuli, Gandaki Province, on December 7, 2017. Local media reported that the detonation injured one person.

On December 7, 2017, a bomb reportedly detonated at the polling station at Raja Mahatma Secondary School in Pachangar, Province No. 5, injuring five people, according to local media sources.

In addition to polling related violence, on February 28 and March 1, 2017, explosive devices were found at two boarding schools in Rajbiraj, Saptari district, Province No. 2. The Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha-Goit (JTMM-G) claimed responsibility, saying it had targeted the schools for failure to observe a bandh, or general strike, in Terai, that the group had called.

GCPEA did not identify any attacks on schools in 2018. In 2019, GCPEA compiled four media reports of attacks on schools, all of which involved explosive devices or unknown weapons targeting schools or school security:

- On July 3, 2019, police reportedly removed an explosive device from an elementary school in Kharpunath Rural Municipality, Humla district, Karnali state, according to INSEC Online. The device was found while renovation work was being carried out on the playground.
- On September 6, 2019, local media reported that an IED detonated inside Delhi Public School, located inside the BP Koirala Institute of Health.
- On November 30, 2019, local media sources reported that explosive devices detonated in at least two schools used as polling centers during elections in and around Pokhara, Kaski district, Gandaki state.

Attacks on school students, teachers, and other education personnel

Attacks on school teachers occurred infrequently during the reporting period. GCPEA identified two media reports of attacks on temporary teachers that occurred in the first half of 2019 in Kathmandu and Janakpur cities. Police arrested teachers on non-permanent contracts who were protesting for improved working conditions and permanent contracts. GCPEA also identified one media report of an explosive device that affected a teacher protection unit. Reported incidents occurring in 2019 included:

- On March 4, 2019, media reported that police detained four temporary teachers demonstrating in Kathmandu city against a proposed Federal Education Bill. The temporary teachers were protesting for job security. Reports also alleged that three teachers were hospitalized for injuries sustained by force used by police to disperse the protest.
- On March 25, 2019, The Himalayan Times reported that an explosive device allegedly detonated near or inside a police van that was protecting local schools in Ratab, Kalikot district, Karnali Province.
- On April 4, 2019, local media reported that police detained 15 temporary teachers holding a hunger strike in Kathmandu city. The temporary teachers were protesting for job security.

Attacks on higher education

GCPEA collated at least eight reported attacks on higher education students and facilities between 2017 and 2019. State security forces used excessive force to disperse student protesters, and arrested students during this reporting period. Three attacks on higher education occurred in February 2017, in conjunction with student elections at universities. They included:

- On February 13, 2017, the All Nepal National Free Student Union-Revolutionary, a student branch of the CPN-M, reportedly attacked the rector of Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu, Bagmati Province, forcing her from her
car and burning it. The student group claimed that the rector had not met their demands regarding Union elections, according to local media.1273

- Unidentified assailants abducted two administrators and a professor from Lamki Multiple Campus, in Kailali, Sudurpashchim Province, on February 27, 2017; police rescued the personnel later that same day.1274

- On February 27, 2017, local media reported that an explosive device was set off at the Dravya Shah Multiple Campus in Gorkha, Gandaki Province; no casualties were reported, and no responsibility was claimed.1275

GCPEA identified no reported incidents of attacks on higher education in 2018. In 2019, police used excessive force to disperse student protests, and arrested dozens of students, in four reported incidents.1276 Students protested various campus-specific and national higher education issues, including admissions requirements, hiring processes for staff, and handling of staff misconduct cases by university administration. In addition, at least one explosive device was allegedly found on a university campus. Examples included:

- On April 30, 2019, at the Sayam Campus of Pokhara University in Kathmandu city, Nepal Student Union members protested against the institution’s enrolment of students who did not meet admissions requirements. Police reportedly baton charged the protesters to disperse them and arrested at least one student, as reported in local media and by a local rights monitor.1277

- On September 11, 2019, local media reported that police arrested 15 students of Chitwan Medical College, in Bharatpur, Chitwan district, Bagmati Province, who were protesting the institution’s fees system. The report alleged that the son of Netra Bikram Chand, the leader of the CPN-M, was amongst the arrested students.1278

- On September 6, 2019, local media reported that an explosive device allegedly detonated inside Sushma Gondavari College, in Itahari, Sunsari district, Province No. 1. The incident, which occurred on the same day as an attack on a school in Sunsari district, allegedly damaged the building.1279


1250 The Asia Foundation, *The State of Conflict and Violence in Asia*, Nepal chapter, p. 120.


1261 Basanta Pratap Singh, “Socp votes cast in Bajhang; explosives go off in four places.”

1262 Basanta Pratap Singh, “Socp votes cast in Bajhang; explosives go off in four places.”

1263 Basanta Pratap Singh, “Socp votes cast in Bajhang; explosives go off in four places.”

1264 “IED goes off in two election centres of Nawalparasi, 6 injured [Update],” *EKantipur.com*, December 7, 2017; as cited in START, GTD 201712070014.


