



Cover Note for Public Release of Carter Center Nepal Private Reports

October 2014

From 2009-2014, The Carter Center conducted a mission to report on Nepal's peace process and constitution drafting. Teams of national and international long-term observers were deployed in each of the country's five development regions. Over the course of the mission, the observations they produced were shared with the Nepali public and international stakeholders in a series of reports.

Carter Center observations on recent identity-based mobilization in Nepal
June 8, 2012

Introduction

garnered much national-level attention. However, identity-based activism has spiked at moments when there has been an external trigger to react to – generally a trigger in which a decision is made, or appears imminent, that could produce perceived (or actual) winners and losers. Such triggers can be national or local, but tend to produce a larger response when they are nationally generated.

Thus, although identity-based groups were largely quiet for most of early 2012, there was a spike in activity in reaction to the release of the State Restructuring Commission (SRC) report on January 31. Additionally, as the May 27, 2012 deadline approached, it became increasingly clear that for the first time ever in the constitutional process there might be a draft or full constitution produced. This was unlike previous constitutional deadlines which had met with minimal local-level response as there was no . . . or decision to react to. The May 2012 deadline, therefore, provoked massive protests throughout the country, in particular by the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN) and other Adivasi-Janajati organizations through the Indigenous Nationalities Joint Struggle Committee (INJSC) and also by the newly formed National Integrity and Ethnic Goodwill Joint Struggle Committee (NIEG) an alliance of 11 different groups including the Brahmin Samaj and Chhetri Samaj. Carter Center of . . . , dset that the CA deadline represented a last chance to realize their ambitions, whether in favor of or against ethnicity-based federalism. With the dissolution of the CA, identity-based groups currently appear to be quiet again but may be strategizing about the best way to take their agenda forward and the next triggers that could be used for mobilization.

Finally, external triggers have also encouraged identity-based groups to overcome the internal

organized by Brahmin and Chhetri groups were asked for NPR 500, while those who did not participate were expected to contribute NPR 1000.

3. A common trend in many parts of the country was a polarization between Janajati groups

incidents of communal tension had been relatively low and mainly arising from issues unrelated to federalism, such as disputes over cultural practices such as untouchability. One of the most common responses from citizens when asked about state restructuring was that they do not want any new structure that will lead to communal tensions or problems with their neighbors. Despite several years of attempts by identity-based activities to mobilize people along identity lines, there has been relatively little response from common citizens in many parts of Nepal.

In this context, Carter Center observers reported that tensions during the May protest programs were generally lower outside of municipalities and off of the main highways, even in mixed communities. More follow-up research is currently being done by observers to assess how communal sentiment has changed in the post-May context.

6. Observers reported negative perceptions by Janajatis regarding the role of police and

NEFIN position than their party position. In Ilam the NEFIN bandh was reportedly supported by ethnic sister wings of the NC, UML, and UCPN(M).

8. geographic areas where multiple identity groups were strong enough to launch competing claims.

For example, both Kailali and Kaski districts were areas that were strongly contested by different identity groups (in Kailali, the United Far Western Struggle Committee vs. the Joint Tharu Struggle Committee,

11. In some areas, organizations emerged to demand that particular districts be selected as the new provincial capitals.

Such demands were reportedly raised in places such as Ilam, Dhankuta, Biratnagar, Dang, Nepalgunj, Dadeldhura, and Doti, using different methods of protest and sometimes involving the local business community. As the debate on federalism moves forward and implementation begins, it can be expected

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THE CARTER CENTER
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Note: This document summarizes recent field updates from Carter Center observers around Nepal. It is based on direct observations, stakeholder interviews, local media reports, and reports from other organizations. Please note that the information contained herein has not been fully vetted and therefore should not be considered verified.

Summary of Main Findings

- x The Far-Western Region has been the most active in recent weeks in terms of political protests and bandhs, and the most sensitive in terms of communal harmony. Although the indefinite Unified Far West (UFW) bandh was recently called off after approximately 20 days, a Joint Tharu Struggle Committee (JTSC) bandh continues and has been extended through May 22. The situation remains

Interviews in Ilam and

Local Initiatives

May 17: Observers noted reports of a significant number of cross-party and cross-ethnic community meetings called with the purpose of maintaining community harmony. There have also been meetings by the press, the LPC and the human rights defenders network for the same purpose. One Madhesi party leader noted his belief that these preventative measures would be sufficient to deter clashes. However, observers are not aware of any direct meetings between pro- and anti-ethnic-federalism groups. INSEC has been asked by the LPC to act as an intermediary between the groups supporting ethnic federalism and those opposing. The CDO has issued an ordinance that any enforcer with a stick or other weapon will be immediately arrested.

Context and Issues to Watch

To date, no clear indications of communal tensions or clashes between protesting groups in Banke district.

Far-Western Region team report

(TCC FWR team currently reporting out of Kailali and Banke districts)

Bandhs, Rallies, Protest Programs, and Security Incidents

May 18: The five-day general strike called by the Joint Tharu-047.00219(i1g)10c.BDC -3v15913.002(i)sc(I)33.985(o0(go2(da

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Summary of Main Findings:

- x The Joint Tharu Struggle Committee has announced the extension of its Tarai bandh through May 25 and

May 22: The Banke Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ) took out a rally on Tuesday evening protesting the beating of two journalists by the Tharuhat bandh organizers on May 21 and the perceived nationwide attack on press freedom over the previous several days. Representatives of several civil society organizations and the UML reportedly addressed the rally.

May 22: According to media reports, two reporters were assaulted in Banke. The police have reportedly arrested three Tharuhat supporters in connection to the incidents. The FNJ, numerous media organizations, and several human rights issued press releases condemning the incidents.

Local Initiatives

May 23: A rally was held in Gulariya, Bardiya. The rally passed off peacefully and was attended by approximately 70 to 80 people. A similar rally was reportedly held by the LPC in Dailekh one day prior. The LPC in Bardiya also held a public meeting on May 22 to discuss the current situation in the district. Approximately 100 people participated and the meeting was broadcast live on local FM radio. A similar event was also held by the LPC in Banke District.

May 22: Civil society representatives in Gulariya, Bardiya convened a meeting and called for schools to be allowed to open during the ongoing bandhs. A JTSC leader reportedly responded that allowing the schools to open during the bandh would weaken the Tharu struggle. Reportedly, further attempts are likely to be made in the next few days to reach an agreement to open the schools in Bardiya.

May 21: In Banke, the District Youth Club Network organized a bicycle rally for social goodwill and urged everyone to help maintain ethnic, religious and social harmony in the district. Youths from several VDCs participated in the rally.

Context and Issues to Watch
NTR

Far-Western Region team report
(TCC FWR team currently reporting out of Kailali district)

Bandhs, Rallies, Protest Programs, and Security Incidents

May 22: The Joint Tharu Struggle Committee bandh has been extended until May 25. A press release in local newspapers announced that it would be enforced 24-hours daily.

May 22: The Undivided Far West Civil Movement Committee (UFWCMC) is resuming its indefinite bandh

May 22: Local newspapers report that medical are running low in Bajura DHQ and that food is becoming scarce in seven VDCs due to the ongoing bandh. The Senior Health Assistant of the District Health Office told Carter Center observers that there are medical supplies for ten days in the DHQ but that vehicles meant to deliver more supplies have not arrived. He also mentioned that food supplies in the DHQ warehouse are sufficient for 15 days.

Local Initiatives

Western Region team report

(TCC WR team currently reporting out of Kaski district)

Bandhs, Rallies, Protest Programs and Security Incidents

May 21: Cadres enforcing the NEFIN bandh removed prohibited Western Region signs from two intersections in Pokhara, resulting in skirmishes between Janajatis and the police at both sites. At one chowk (intersection), three people were reportedly injured, including an 8-month-old child who was hit on the head with a stone. In response to the sign being removed, around 300 Brahmins/Chhetris gathered around the chowk and wrote a new sign. A lengthy standoff followed with around 70 APF positioning themselves between the Brahmins/Chhetris and Janajatis (mainly Gurungs from Tamu Dhi Nepal) who numbered around 30. The Brahmin/Chhetri group was much more vocal and there were several episodes of sporadic rioting. A group of women carried the new sign to the chowk and the police allowed them to erect it. After this most of the Brahmins and

Non-Janajati journalists are perceived to be turning against the NEFIN bandh following several attacks on journalists and their vehicles. This appears to be contributing to a split within the media between Janajatis and

Interlocutors in Ilam widely agreed that the new constitution should be promulgated by May 27 and criticized the recent bandhs and some hoped that the promulgation of a new constitution would end the current turmoil. However, the UCPN-M representative said that even though he would like to see the new constitution promulgated on time, the option of extension should be left open. Citizens interviewed in Ilam bazaar hoped that the constitution would be promulgated on time but some of them doubted that it would be, given the history of repeated extensions. Many of them expressed dissatisfaction with the recent bandhs and some hoped that the promulgation of a new constitution would end the current turmoil.

Bandhs, Rallies, Protest Programs, and Security Incidents

May 25: The FLSC-Palungwa bandh was effective in Ilam bazaar from May 23-25. On the first day, movement of all vehicles was halted but from the second day onwards motorbikes were allowed to move. However, in Dhankuta, the bandh was reported to be largely ineffective.

May 25: In Dhankuta, citizens and various groups and parties have enforced a bandh since May 15 to

Context and Issues to Watch

Local Perceptions of Recent Political Developments

NTR

Bandhs, Rallies, Protest Programs and Security Incidents

May 25: The situation in Nepalgunj is calm despite three bandhs called in the Mid Western Region (MWR) by the Broader Madhesi Front, Samyukta Loktantrik Tharu Morcha, Rastriya Nagarik Force/National Citizen

several anecdotes regarding Tharu citizens being threatened with fines from the Badghar (traditional leader) for not participating in recent programs. One Tharu source told observers that Tharus were being coerced to

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Local Perceptions of Recent Political Developments

There has been no immediate public reaction or protest program organized in response to current political developments in Birgunj. Local party representatives remained confused about the current situation and said that ambiguity would persist until a final decision is made regarding the proposed November election. Parties expected to come up with specific plan of activities after the final decision is made. A journalist reported that common people were shocked about the dissolution of the CA and the hold fresh elections. Citizens have reportedly blamed all political parties for their failure to produce a new constitution and for prolonging the already protracted transitional phase.

Bandhs, Rallies, Protest Programs, and Security Incidents

Bandhs organized by different groups in Parsa have been called off as of May 28. However, a group of people associated with Hindu Sangh have been conducting sit-in program near Ghantaghar, Birgunj demanding that Nepal be declared a Hindu state.

Western Region team report:

(TCC WR team currently reporting out of Kaski district)

Local Perceptions of Recent Political Developments

Citizens interviewed in Pokhara were angry and disappointed go for new elections. Much of the anger was directed towards political leaders, and frustrations centered on a sense that the CA had proven a waste of money and time. One citizen said bemoaned that the c has been thrown Some citizens said that they would not vote in the next election. Political party representatives

NC and UML said they were sad and shocked. An RPP-N representative seemed happy with the decision,

