



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.

THE
CARTER CENTER

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,

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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

from drivers, which according to NEFIN will be returned to the owners. The bandh was reportedly supported by all NEFIN members, FDNF-affiliate FLSC (FLSC-Lingden), ethnic sister wings of the NC, UML and UCPN-M, and the Baidya faction of the UCRN-

May 19: In Ilam, NEFIN held a torch rally attended by around 1000 people. Police presence was strong; approximately 150 police, both regular and armed, were present. Armed police carried batons, guns or teargas guns. Police seemed tense but their behavior was observed to be appropriate. Although the program was peaceful, participants were excited and at times aggressive, shouting slogans against the unitary system, the state and the three major parties (NC, UML and UCPN-M), and even against an undivided Far-West. Participants also called for unity and common struggle of all Adivasi-Janajati groups.

May 19: Clashes were reported during a NEFIN torch rally in Dharan, Sunsari. According to a local newspaper, clashes started when police tried to stop demonstrators from gathering after a demonstrator threw stones at the police. Police fired teargas and used batons and six demonstrators as well as six police were reportedly injured. According to a news report, NEFIN representatives claimed that their movement was infiltrated by the person throwing stones to start violence and discredit their protest.

Local Initiatives NTR

Context and Issues to Watch

May 20: Various interlocutors in Ilam district repeatedly raised concerns that clashes between Adivasi-Janajati (particularly Limbuwan groups) and Brahmin-Chhetri groups may occur in the near future due to their conflicting demands and increasing frustration among some sections of those groups over what they see as the dismissal of their demands. A representative of Nepali Congress' Nepal Limbu Sangh said that "relation between these two groups are getting tense and without major incentives taken at the central level to address WKH LVVXH LW ZLOO EH GLIILFXOW W RowereQ WdRnoCldRPs-HdR UHV D W while they are concerned about clashes between some groups, they are less concerned about large-scale communal tensions that would affect people not involved in politics.

Central Region team report:

(TCC CR team currently reporting out of Kathmandu, but the update below is for Chitwan District)

Bandhs, Rallies, Protest Programs, and Security Incidents

May 21: The bandh called by NEFIN was effective in Chitwan. Two journalists reported to observers that the VLWXDWLRQ KDV UHPDLQHG 3IHUIX Protesters was Questionable Protesters Q L] H U reportedly manhandled the FNJ district secretary and vandalized his motorcycle at around 11:00 am at Ratnagar, Tandi.

Local Initiatives

The Chitwan CDO organized a meeting of all stakeholders in the district approximately one week ago to avoid any untoward incidents, as bandhs called by the Brahmin Samaj and Chhetri Samaj and Tharu organizations in the district were scheduled to overlap. All sides agreed to ensure the bandhs would go forward peacefully.

Context and Issues to Watch

Local journalists in Chitwan characterized the NEFIN bandh on May 21 as more fearful compared to the bandhs in the past and said journalists themselves were feeling insecure. Journalists also spoke about the possibility of communal tensions or clashes if the bandh organizers failed to maintain control of the protesters.

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 extensions. 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

