

# Nepal: Freedom of Religion or Belief (art. 18)

## Stakeholders Report

Submitted to the Human Rights Committee ahead of the consideration of the List of Issues Prior Reporting for Nepal during the Committee's 131<sup>st</sup> session in March 2021.

Submission date: 4 January 2021

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1. Our report addresses the situation of freedom of religion or belief in Nepal in law and in practice.
2. Unless stated otherwise, the Religious Liberty Forum Nepal (RLFN), a platform of Christian organizations and individuals in Nepal advocating for the right to freedom of religion or belief, is the source for the cases of violence and attacks against Christians and churches, and for the cases of government harassment of Christians. Third-party information is referenced in the footnotes and has been corroborated by the RLFN.
3. This report has two annexes. ANNEX 1 (page 7) lists cases of detention of Christians and of court cases against them. ANNEX 2 (page 10) lists cases of violence and threats of violence against Christians.
4. In recent years, Nepal has experienced growing hostility towards minority religious groups, mirroring a regional and global trend. Faith based organizations which are actively engaged in Nepal are reporting mounting challenges and infringements to their right to freedom of religion or belief, as well as to the operations of international and local NGOs.

## **Restrictions on the Right to Freedom of Religion in the Constitution**

5. In 2015 Nepal enacted a new constitution. Article 26-1 of this constitution protects the right to freedom of religion or belief by stating that “every person who has faith in religion shall have the freedom to profess, practices and protect his or her religion according to his or her conviction.” Article 26-1 does not include the right to choose or change a religion.
6. Wide and far-reaching restrictions on the right to freedom of religion are imposed in the third clause of Article 26 which states “*No person shall, in the exercise of the right conferred by this Article, do, or cause to be done, any act which may be contrary to public health, decency and morality or breach public peace, or convert another person from one religion to another or any act or conduct that may jeopardize the other’s religion and such act shall be punishable by law.*”
7. This provision conflicts with Nepal’s constitutional “proportional and inclusive” principles as outlined in the constitution’s preamble. It creates the risk of significant infringements to the right to freedom of religion of belief by introducing the vague and far-reaching notion of “conduct that may jeopardize the other’s religion,” as well as by including the assumption that religious conversion is something forced and not freely chosen.
8. Furthermore, Article 4 of the constitution provides an explanation of the term “secular” as follows: “‘secular’ means religious, cultural freedoms, including protection of religion, culture handed down from the time immemorial”. This explanation for the term “secularism” is problematic as it seeks to give a special status to *Sanatana* – the religion and culture handed down from ancient times which is commonly understood as Hinduism – over and above other all religious faith and traditions.
9. Article 26-2 states that “Every religious denomination shall have the right to operate and protect its religious sites and religious Guthi (trusts). Provided that nothing shall be deemed to prevent the

regulation, by making law, of the operation and protection of religious sites and religious trusts and management of trust properties and lands.” In contrast to this article, there are no legal provisions for registration of churches and their properties such as worship centers, institutions, schools, Bible colleges, burial grounds or social organizations. Currently, church property is registered either under NGOs, or in the name of individuals.

## **The Revised Criminal Code Further Limits the Right to Freedom of Religion or Belief**

10. A revision to the Criminal Code which came into effect in 2018 further refined the intent of the aforementioned constitutional amendment.
11. Article 156 of the Criminal Code criminalizes, with two years of imprisonment, the wounding of “religious sentiments of any caste, community or ethnic groups by using texts, writing, verbal, symbols or any other means.”
12. Article 157 of the Criminal Code punishes, with one year of imprisonment, anyone who “knowingly poses any form of hindrance to the religious tradition of other faith being practiced since ancient times (Sanatan).” Article 158 of the Criminal Code limits the right to choose one’s religion in the following terms: “(1) No one should involve or encourage religious conversion; (2) No one should convert a person from one religion to another religion or profess their own religion and belief with similar intention by whether using or not means of attraction, and by disturbing the religion or belief of any ethnic groups or community that is being practiced from time immemorial (Sanatan).”
13. The vague wording of the Code is conducive to arbitrary application and misuse. The changes to the Constitution and Criminal Code strengthen the position of Hinduism, to the detriment of other religions, and has a “chilling effect” on freedom of expression as it fails to provide the clear boundary of what is prohibited. These clauses can be and have been invoked against a wide range of legitimate expressions of religious faith that are protected by international law.

## **Arrest and Courts Cases Against Christians for “Conversion”**

14. For this report, we have documented cases where 19 persons were arrested and taken to court on charges of “conversion” during the course of 2018, and 15 persons in 2019. While we have documented cases prior to 2018, our reporting is most systematic, but not exhaustive, in 2018 and 2019. To-date, no one has been convicted on the basis of articles 156, 157 and 158 of the Criminal Code. Several court cases are currently ongoing.
15. In an emblematic case that unfolded on 23 April 2019, the Nepalese police arrested four people in Hotel Doko, Ghorahi, Dang District, during an indoor pastors training. The detainees were charged with religious conversion and distribution of Christian material, despite not holding any activity open to the public. The detainees were released on 29 April. In February 2020, the courts dropped all charges against the four Christians.

16. On 22 March 2020, Pastor Keshav Raj Acharya, in Pokhara, was arrested by Kaski District Police on the charges of violation of public health and peace order, following the publication of a video of him praying against the coronavirus in February 2020 (filmed prior to the lockdown in Nepal). District administration Kaski fined him and ordered release but he was not released from the custody instead a new charges were brought forward accusing the pastor of "conversion activities". These charges were based on the same video that was filmed in February. On 13 May, the police took him into custody from the court premises in Dolpa district. Petitions were made to the Supreme Court in Nepal and to the National Human Rights Commission of Nepal. Pastor Raj Acharya remained in prison until 28 June when the court released him on bail. His court case involving charges of "conversion activities," on the basis of Sections 156 and 158 of the Nepalese Penal Code, is ongoing.
17. We have included in the annex a list of cases of detention of Christians and of court cases against them that the Religious Liberty Forum Nepal documented, or documented by third parties and corroborated by the RLFN (ANNEX 1).

## **No Accountability for Violence Against Christians and Attacks Against Church Property**

18. Legislative and political developments have been accompanied with increased violence against religious minorities, especially against the Christian minority.
19. While there were no attacks on church buildings in 2019, five attacks on church buildings took place in 2018. One attack took place in 2017. To-date, no one has been held accountable for all these attacks on church buildings. The following are the documented cases of attacks on church buildings in 2017 and 2018.
  - a. On 14 September 2015, in Jhapa district, bombs went off at two churches causing structural damage only to buildings. Three police officers were injured on 15 September while attempting to defuse bomb at a third church. Pamphlets promoting radical Hindu organization were found at all 3 sites.<sup>1</sup> One person was arrested.
  - b. On 18 April 2017, several persons attacked Assumption Roman Catholic Cathedral in Lalitpur, Kathmandu Valley. The church compound sustained significant damage, but attackers couldn't enter the church building.<sup>2</sup>
  - c. On 1 March 2018, an arson attack was carried out on Dhading church, in Hindugh, Dhading. It was rebuilt as a temporary church which was again burnt down within 3 weeks.
  - d. On 5 May 2018, an arson attack was carried out on a Catholic church in Kohalpur, Banke District. A group of eight to ten unidentified arsonists reportedly warned locals to stay inside

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1 Churches bombed as Nepal stays secular, 15 September 2015,

<https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/coe/churches-bombed-as-nepal-stays-secular/>

2 2018 International Religious Freedom Report of the United States Department of State

their houses, before breaking into St. Joseph's Catholic Church, in the town of Kohalpur, in the early hours of 5 May. They then doused it with petrol and set it alight.<sup>3</sup>

- e. In May 2018, four churches in Dhangadhi, in Kanchanpur, in Doti and in Panchthar were attacked over a five-day period from 9 May. No one was killed as the attacks were carried out at night, but the churches were set of fire and suffered a substantial amount of structural damage, resulting in thousands of dollars of repairs. The church in Dhangadhi was attacked by a bomb thrown through a window.<sup>4</sup>

20. We have included in the annex a list of cases of violence and threats of violence against Christians that the Religious Liberty Forum Nepal documented, or documented by third parties and corroborated by the RLFN (ANNEX 2).

## **Lack of Political Representation for Christians**

21. Nepal's elections are based on a proportional representation system. However, in February 2018, the European Union's Election Observation Mission to Nepal stated, in its report on Nepal's House of Representatives and provincial assembly elections, that Christians were not represented in the election, despite comprising 1.4 percent of the population. The report indicated that Nepal's electoral system is not fully inclusive, as claimed in the constitution.

## **Repressive Measures Against Local and International NGOs**

22. There are more than 200 international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and approximately 50,000 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Nepal. The government is seeking to tighten its regulation of INGOs and NGOs, as it has tried to do many times in the past.

23. In May 2018, Nepal's government issued a draft document, the National Integrity Policy, laying down strict guidelines about what aid agencies and non-government groups can and cannot do. Aimed at regulating the activities of, namely, Western aid agencies, this policy has broad working, and could easily be misused to restrict the activities of religious minority groups. This policy stipulates that international non-governmental organizations "must not act against Nepal's civilization, culture, social relations and goodwill," and "must not push for their religious, social or other agendas in Nepal." The policy adds that "INGOs assisting foreign embassies and religious missions (...) will be barred."

24. In June 2018, Nepali media outlets reported that the ministers from Home Affairs Ministry and Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizen have jointly decided not to renew the registration of local NGOs and INGOs who are involved in religious activities.

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3 Nepal: Catholic church interior 'entirely destroyed' after arson, 11 May 2018, <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/coe/nepal-catholic-church-interior-entirely-destroyed-by-arson-attack/>

4 Nepal: Four churches targeted in arson attacks, 15 May 2018, <https://www.csw.org.uk/2018/05/15/press/3974/article.htm>

25. Leaders of international NGOs carrying out humanitarian aid report that their work is increasingly under threat from new governmental directives, including the National Integrity Policy. The Policy also has had a major impact on other entities including national NGOs.
26. These directives include the following concerns: (a) The tax free status of NGOs is no longer being renewed; (b) Chief District Officers in various regions are blocking the sale of NGO property; (c) Humanitarian aid workers are experiencing increased challenges in having their visas renewed, an appreciable amount having had to leave the country already; and (d) The State's expressed intent to expropriate NGO-owned land.
27. The NGO leaders report that many of the clauses in the policy existed previously but had not been consistently implemented or enforced. They report a lack of clarity as to what some of the processes and procedures outlined in the policy actually mean, but it seems likely that parts of the policy are unconstitutional and in violation of Nepal commitments under international human rights law.
28. The National Integrity Policy refers to the issue of proselytization, which was made a criminal offense in 2018, but it also mentions "influence or inspire" in the context of religious freedom. This is vague language and at risk of subjective interpretation. One organization which has been careful to adhere to the law regarding proselytization expressed concern that their practice to have a devotional session once a week which was optional for staff, was recognized to be a risk and open to misunderstanding and condemnation as a result of the policy.
29. The language around advocacy and lobbying is ambiguous. The policy contains ambiguous language about promoting the agenda of foreign governments, religions or bringing harm to Nepali culture. This would need to be clarified before the policy is made into law.
30. The level of commitment of the government to making the policy into law is also unclear. Currently there are about 300 acts waiting to be passed by government.

## **Suggestions for the List of Issues**

31. How is the third clause of Article 26 of the Constitution of Nepal, which states "No person shall (...) do (...) any act which may (...) convert another person from one religion to another or any act or conduct that may jeopardize the other's religion and such act shall be punishable by law", compatible with Article 18 of the ICCPR?
32. How can religious organizations legally register, in accordance with article 26 of the Constitution.?
33. How are articles 156, 157 and 158 of the Criminal Code to compliance compliance with international human rights law, namely the right to freedom of religion or belief?
34. Can you provide us with information on cases of arrest and trial on the basis of articles 155, 156, 157 and 158 of the Criminal Code?
35. Can you provide information on the legal basis for the court cases against Christian pastors Dilli Ram Paudel and Keshav Acharya?

36. What measures has the Nepalese government taken to protect religious minorities and their places of worship, and to investigate cases of attacks on places of worship and on members of religious minorities?
37. How are burial grounds provided for religious minorities?
38. How is the National Integrity Policy compatible with Nepal's commitments under the ICCPR to freedom of religion or belief and to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association?

## **ANNEXES**

### **ANNEX 1: Cases of detention of Christians in Nepal and of court cases against them**

On 1 June 2016, in Charikot, Dolakha District, eight Christians were charged of attempting to convert children to Christianity through the distribution of a comic book which explains the story of Jesus. They were acquitted of all charges in December 2016.<sup>5</sup>

On 21 July 2016, in Salyan, four Christians sentenced for "violence" and "witchcraft" against a severely mentally ill woman whom they sought to heal.<sup>6</sup> On 22 September 2017, the high court annulled the conviction.

On 22 March 2018, in Nepalganj, Banke district. Sonia Chanda Thakuri and her sister Elina Wod were accused of attempting religious conversion of another person and of destroying Hindu idols. The courts later acquitted the two women.

On 30 April 2018, in Chitwan, Devi Rai and another believer were accused of trying to convert a family to Christianity and encouraging to destroy the Hindu idols. She was released after a few days of the arrest.

On 8 May 2018, in Nagarjun-4, Sitapaila, in Kathmandu, three ladies, Sumitra Gauli, Radhika

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5 Uncertainty for Religious Minorities as Nepal Celebrates First Anniversary of its Constitution, 20 September 2016, <https://forbinfull.org/2016/09/20/uncertainty-for-religious-minorities-as-nepal-celebrates-first-anniversary-of-its-constitution/>

6 Nepali church leaders found guilty of 'witchcraft' and 'violence' for helping mentally ill woman, 22 December 2016, <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2016/12/nepali-church-leaders-found-guilty-of-witchcraft-and-violence-for-helping-mentally-ill-woman/>; 2017 International Religious Freedom Report of the United States Department of State, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2017-report-on-international-religious-freedom/>

Maharjan and Phuldevi Bhattarai were arrested and accused of trying to convert a woman by inducement.

On 9 May 2018, in Tehrathum District, six Christians were arrested for sharing their testimonies publicly. On 9 July 2018, the court acquitted them, freeing them and releasing their car which had been impounded.<sup>7</sup>

On 19 May 2018, in Belbari-3, Morang, Bhim Bahadur Pradhan and Nabin Kumar Mandal were arrested as they were giving Christian teaching at a home. They were accused of speaking against Hindu gods. They belong to the group Zion, also known as Ahn Sahng-Hong or Witnesses of Jesus Church of God which is neither evangelical nor catholic. They were subsequently released from detention. The case was not taken to court.

On 15 June 2018, in Morang, Ms. Deepu Karmachari was arrested on charges of evangelizing. Karmachari, 50, was preaching at the home of Khushbu Kamat when the police received a complaint related to the home gathering. She was detained in custody for one day.

On July 2018, Isak Tamang of the Shreejanga Free Church and Pastor Dip Rai of the Chengbung Free Church, as well as David Limbu and Shristi Limbu and Laxmi They were arrested and charged under Article 158 of the Criminal Code of "preaching" in the market of Sakranti Bazar of Aathrai city in Terhthum District, Taplejung. They were detained for 14 days, released with a bail of 5,000 Rupees each (equivalent to USD 500). Later in August, the court cleared them of all charges.<sup>8</sup>

On 6 July 2018, in Kathmandu, Devera Richard (Filipino citizen), and his wife Rita Gongga (Indonesian citizen) were deported on the charge of being involved in religious activities while holding business visas, with restriction to enter Nepal for one year, their business visa was also canceled. Both were staff members of Sigma Restaurant Pulchowk, a restaurant run by a Singaporean Christian in Kathmandu. They worshiped in Every Nation Church, Kumaripati.

On 2 September 2018, in Palpa, a police officer was arrested for giving his testimony in a multi-faith religious gathering while he was on leave. Mr. Gurung had become practicing Sachchai believer four years prior. His superiors there have decided to withhold his departmental promotion for five years as punishment.<sup>9</sup>

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7 2018 International Religious Freedom Report of the United States Department of State, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2018-report-on-international-religious-freedom/>; Christians in Nepal Suspect Hindu Extremists in Sudden Attacks on Churches, 21 May 2018, <https://morningstarnews.org/2018/05/christians-in-nepal-suspect-hindu-extremists-in-sudden-attacks-on-churches/>

8 Pressure on Christians Heats Up in Nepal, 11 July 2018, <https://morningstarnews.org/2018/07/pressure-on-christians-heats-up-in-nepal/>; and the 2018 International Religious Freedom Report of the United States Department of State

9 He is reported as a Christian but mainline churches in Nepal do not recognize this group called "Sachchai" as Christian. This group gives emphasis on healing by prayer and discourage sick people to go to medical facilities; Policeman Punished for Talking about Christ at Public Religious Meeting in Nepal, 30 October 2018, <https://morningstarnews.org/2018/10/policeman-punished-for-talking-about-christ-at-public-religious-meeting-in-nepal/>

On 4 November 2018, in Butwal, four Christian women, two of whom were Japanese, were arrested in Nepal on charges of trying to convert Dalits and nomads without land to Christianity by force.<sup>10</sup>

On 22 February 2019, the organization Youth With A Mission and 10 people from seven other countries visiting villages in Baglung and distributing bibles were questioned by the police and asked to appear at the district headquarters the next day. The following morning, the police asked again about the purpose of their visit. The police asked them to leave the place without further distribution.

On 7 April 2019, in Bhairahawa, Rupandehi, two Japanese nationals and a Nepali citizen were arrested with a charge of religious conversion. The report on Annapurna Post said these two Japanese were in Nepal with student visas and involved in conversion. They were Jehovah Witnesses.

On 23 April 2019, at 8 a.m., the Nepalese police arrested four people in Hotel Doko, Ghorahi, Dang District. The four arrested were Mr. Dilliram Poudel, Secretary General of the Nepal Christian Society (an associate member of the World Evangelical Alliance), Indian citizen Mr. Gurab Shribastav, Nepali citizen Ms. Kunsang Tamang, and a United States national, Ms. Leanna Cinquanta. Their Bibles and personal belongings, including cash and laptops, were confiscated by the police. Those arrested, with the exception of the American citizen, were taken to court on charges related to religious conversion and distribution of Christian material, despite the fact that they were conducting meetings and training with pastors on 22 and 23 April, at a local church. On 29 April, after a court hearing that lasted almost all day, all three detainees were released. The American citizen was not deported and was released in the evening of 24 April by the immigration office in Kathmandu. In February 2020, the courts dropped all charges against the four Christians.

On 30 May 2019, in Lalitpur, Pastor Hari Tamang was charged with an attempt to covert children. He had an ongoing case in the Supreme Court and had been freed on bail, but the police in Lalitpur arrested him without a reason and kept him in custody from 30 May to 2 June 2019. His case is pending at the Supreme Court in Nepal.

During June 2019, in Dharan, Sunsari District, a Christian boy named Ashik from Dharan was accused of killing a cow. He and two of his friends were attempting to remove the dead animal from the river side. Authorities kept the boy in custody and set his bail for the equivalent of \$743. The court has yet to decide on this case.

On 21 June 2019, the police detained an American citizen Bradley Navarro Anagaran in Bansgadhi, Bardiy, found to be in possession of discipleship leaflets. Pastor Hira Singh Sunar went to the police station to get information on the case and was arrested immediately. They were taken to court and

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<sup>10</sup> Kathmandu, four Christians arrested for 'forced conversion' of dalit, 6 November 2018, <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Kathmandu,-four-Christians-arrested-for-'forced-conversion'-of-dalit-45396.html>

their detention was extended for one week for investigation before being released. Both were charged with attempt to convert. The court has yet to decide on this case.

On 23 July 2019, in Pokhara, Kaski district, a Christian from South Korea, Cho Yusang, was arrested on charges of “attempting to convert,” for allegedly distributing leaflets and Bibles.<sup>11</sup> Aged 73, his health deteriorated after he was incarcerated, and he was hospitalized while in detention. He was released on bail on August 7. In Nepal on a business visa, Cho was also charged with misuse of visa. On 6 February 2020, the courts cleared him from all charges.

In September 2019, police arrested Daya Nepali, 47, from Ananta Jeevan Church, and Maya Maharjan, 42, and her son Dipes Maharjan, 28, from their home Laxminagar-4, Butwal, Rupandehi. They were accused of charges related to witchcraft, following the dissemination of a video of prayer at a church. They were released on bail after several days of detention. On 6 November 2019, a court cleared the three persons of all charges.

On 23 March 2020, Pastor Keshav Raj Acharya of Abundant Harvest Church in Pokhara, was arrested by the Kaski District Police after a video of him was uploaded on YouTube where the pastor said the novel coronavirus could be healed through Christian prayer. After his release on bail on 8 April, he was immediately re-arrested without explanation at the premises of the District Administration office, and charged with “outraging religious feelings” and “attempting to convert” under Sections 156 and 158 of the Nepalese Penal Code. Pastor Raj Acharya remained in prison until 28 June when the court released him on bail. His court case involving charges of "conversion activities" is ongoing.

## **ANNEX 2: Cases of violence and threats of violence against Christians in Nepal**

On 1 May 2015, in Champi village, Lalitpur district, six Christians were attacked by four of their neighbors, who beat them with steel rods. Other Christian families living nearby tried to stop them, but they were fought off. The incident happened during aid distribution and is consequent to threats stemming from religious affiliation.<sup>12</sup>

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11 Foreign Christians Arrested on Charges of ‘Converting’ in Nepal, 8 August 2019, <https://morningstarnews.org/2019/08/foreign-christians-arrested-on-charges-of-converting-in-nepal/>

12 Nepal Christians attacked while trying to help, 18 August 2016, <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2016/08/nepal-christians-attacked-while-trying-to-help/>

On 16 April 2017, in Lalitpur, Kathmandu Valley, a Christian worker, Santosh Khadka, was shot in Kathmandu while returning home from an Easter service.<sup>13</sup> This case remains unresolved at date of submission of this report, and no one has been formally accused of this crime.

On 8 April 2018, in Kathmandu, a Hindu religious leader was arrested on 7 May 2018 on accusation of issuing instructions to shoot himself, to instill religious conflict.<sup>14</sup> He had sought to provoke a strife between Hindus and Christians. He was released on bail and his court case is ongoing at the time of writing of this report.

On 15 June 2018, in Satdobato, Lalitpur District, a group of people came into Anandaban hospital saying they are Shiva Sena (Army of Shiva) and that they had come to stop religious conversion. Non-Christian staff members were in the hospital and they were also threatened.<sup>15</sup>

On 3 November 2018, in Palpa, over a period of two months, Brahmins, the highest caste from which Hindu priests and teachers are drawn, disrupted the worship service of the Pakhluwa Eternal Life Church in Palpa every week, and accused Pastor Tufani Bhar of converting villagers. The church was forced to shut down.<sup>16</sup> It has remained closed every since and the Christian worshipers initiated church meetings in the neighboring village.

On 25 December 2018, in Bharatpur, Chitwan District. On Christmas Day, the president of the Hindu Revival Campaign Nepal (Hindu Jagran Abhiyan Nepal), Ram Prasad Upadhyay, led a huge anti-Christian procession and burned Bibles at a highway intersection. A crowd estimated at between 5,000 and 8,000 people shouted slogans such as, “Beat the Christians,” “Throw out Christians” and “Down with Christians.”<sup>17</sup>

On 20 January 2019, in Kathmandu, threats and intimidation by Hindu extremists forcibly stopped the construction of a church building.<sup>18</sup>

On 23 February 2019, in Pipal Chautari, Dhangadi, two Indian, two European and one Nepali were returning to India from visiting a church in Pipal Chautari when their car was stopped and they were forced out of their vehicle and publicly assaulted by a group led by Sanjib Sahi, mayor-candidate of the Rastriya Prajatantra Party, a political party that promotes Hindu nationalistic views.

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13 Nepal: Christian worker shot at Easter says he's still fearful, 14 July 2017, <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2017/07/nepals-christian-worker-who-was-shot-at-on-easter-says-hes-still-fearful/>

14 'Religious Leader' staged attack on himself to incite conflict, arrested, 7 May 2018, <https://thehimalayantimes.com/nepal/religious-leader-srinibas-acharya-held-from-kathmandu/>

15 See article in Nepali titled “Shiv Sena arrives at Missionary Hospital”, <http://annapurnapost.com/news/129939>

16 Church in Nepal Forced to Shut Down, 16 November 2018, <https://morningstarnews.org/2018/11/church-in-nepal-forced-to-shut-down/>

17 Hindu Extremists Pressure Convert to File False Charge against Pastor in India, Sources Say, 5 February 2019, <https://morningstarnews.org/2019/02/hindu-extremists-pressure-convert-to-file-false-charge-against-pastor-in-india-sources-say>

18 Ibid.

On 10 April 2019, in Sarlahi, a pastor was beaten following a stationery distribution program in a Dalit settlement in Sarlahi. After a few minutes of beating, the attackers instructed him to stop spreading religion. The pastor was involved in a non-religious program helping the Dalit children.<sup>19</sup> The police was informed of the incident, but no arrest has been made to date.

During the second week of September 2019, in Chitwan District, Hindu extremist threats have driven a pastor in Nepal into hiding following a leak onto social media of a restricted audience-interview of a talk he gave in March 2019.<sup>20</sup>

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19 Article in Nepali “Beating by an unidentified group claiming to preach religion,”  
<http://annapurnapost.com/news/123652>

20 Social Media Backlash Reflects New Era of Hostility in Nepal, 16 September 2019,  
<https://morningstarnews.org/2019/09/social-media-backlash-reflects-new-era-of-hostility-in-nepal/>