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# MEDIA MONITORING REPORT: GENZ PROTEST IN NEPAL



Body & Data

# Media Monitoring Report:

## GenZ Protest in Nepal

### Introduction:

On September 8, 2025, thousands of young people gathered at Maitighar-Mandala to protest against systemic corruption<sup>1</sup> and nepotism<sup>2</sup> in Nepali politics, as well as the government's recent ban on 26 social media platforms over non-compliance.<sup>3</sup> The protestors demanded the restoration of free speech, the resignation of the Prime Minister, and a permanent ban from leadership for all politicians who have repeatedly failed. They also called for a new, independent institution to hold corrupt officials accountable. Despite the movement's extensive list of demands, many mainstream media outlets and politicians have focused exclusively on the social media ban, trivialising the protestors' broader concerns. This movement by youths was called the Gen-Z protest. This kind of media narrative minimises the Gen Z protestors' calls for accountability and political reform, including the removal of long-standing leaders. The protest has led to two days of violent clashes, resulting in 72 deaths and hundreds of injuries.<sup>4</sup>

While both national and international news platforms covered the event, their focus on the social media ban misrepresented the Gen Z protests, trivialising the movement's core demands against systemic corruption and political impunity. Furthermore, media outlets have also moved towards spreading misinformation, disinformation, and fear-mongering. This paper examines these media

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<sup>1</sup> Shamim, Sarah. 2025. "Nepal Gen Z protests amid social media ban, clashes kill 19: All to know." Al Jazeera, September 8, 2025, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/9/8/six-killed-in-nepal-amid-gen-z-protests-after-social-media-ban-all-to-know>.

<sup>2</sup> Saaliq, Sheikh, and Niranjan Shrestha. 2025. "Anger over corruption and nepotism fuel Nepal protests." AP News. <https://apnews.com/article/nepal-genz-protest-social-media-ban-9dc6ecd2c089141cc8c36af5949cfc09>.

<sup>3</sup> Sajana Baral, "Nepal bans Facebook and other major social media platforms over non-compliance", 4 September, 2025, <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2025/09/04/nepal-bans-facebook-and-other-major-social-media-platforms-over-non-compliance>

<sup>4</sup> Onlinekhabar, "Death toll in Gen Z movement rises to 72", Online Khabar, September 14, 2025, <https://english.onlinekhabar.com/death-toll-in-gen-z-movement-rises-to-72.html>

narratives and explores how misinformation and disinformation fueled public fear, while social networks simultaneously united and divided the public.

## Background:

In late August and early September, Nepali youth began exposing the lavish lifestyles of politicians, especially of their children, as well as of celebrities. Mostly young online users were observed sharing memes, TikTok videos, and photo comparisons contrasting the privilege of political and celebrity offspring with the daily struggles of ordinary citizens.<sup>5</sup> In their campaign against corruption, they formed the term “Nepo Kids” to describe politicians’ children. Hashtags like “#NepoKids”, “#ByeNepoBabies”, and “#CorruptionFreeNepal” spread rapidly, framing “nepo kids” as symbols of privilege and entrenched corruption.

Just as these trends were peaking on social media, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology enforced a ban on 26 platforms on September 4 for refusing to register locally within the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology.<sup>6</sup> Popular apps like Facebook and Instagram were banned, but TikTok, which had registered with the authority(MoCIT), remained accessible. The ban was imposed by the Ministry, overriding the Social Network Bill pending in parliament.<sup>7</sup> On this, the trend gained even more attention on TikTok and spread rapidly. The ban triggered widespread outrage and pushed digital dissent into the streets. Nepali youths planned for a peaceful protest against corruption, scheduled for September 8, using platforms like TikTok and Discord to coordinate. They called it the “Gen Z Protest.”<sup>8</sup>

The reactions from influencers and politically connected youths reflected the volatility of the moment. The mayor of Kathmandu Metropolitan City, Balen Shah, who has huge followers on

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<sup>5</sup> Project Kura, “Nepali #NepoBaby Trend”, Project Kura, 5 September, 2025, <https://youtube.com/shorts/OfIbdEn0uGw?si=o-YauWKR-vFgdbr3>

<sup>6</sup> Sajana Baral, “Nepal bans Facebook and other major social media platforms over non-compliance”, 4 September, 2025, <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2025/09/04/nepal-bans-facebook-and-other-major-social-media-platforms-over-non-compliance>

<sup>7</sup> Body and data, “Social Network Bill, 2025 Explainer Document”, Body and Data, May 6 2025, <https://bodyanddata.org/social-network-bill-explainer/>

<sup>8</sup> Setopati, “माइतीघरमा आज जेनजीले गर्दैछन् प्रदर्शन”, Setopati, 8 September, 2025, <https://www.setopati.com/social/368605>

Social media, openly backed the protests.<sup>9</sup> Influencers and celebrities posted videos and messages encouraging participation on September 8.

On September 8, thousands of people took to the streets of Kathmandu and other cities, protesting against corruption, unemployment, economic disparity, and the social media ban.<sup>10</sup> Most protesters aged 15 to 25 wore school and college uniforms, carrying books and pens as symbols of peaceful resistance. But the peaceful protest soon turned violent, where Security forces (Police) responded with force, using water cannons, tear gas, firing plastic bullets and live bullets on peaceful demonstrators. 19 youths died within the first day, and hundreds were injured.<sup>11</sup> Tear gas was fired into a civil hospital where the injured were being treated.<sup>12</sup> After which, a curfew was imposed across major areas of Kathmandu, making it difficult to donate blood or provide food and water to the injured. This action from government authorities further fueled public frustration, which was intensified by the then-Prime Minister's public address. He tried to dismiss the protests as unnecessary, saying youths "didn't need to show up just for a social media ban," ignoring that the protest was primarily against corruption.<sup>13</sup> The Prime Minister's words were seen as insensitive, and combined with state-sanctioned violence, intensified the outrage, calling for more intensified protest.

On September 9, despite the curfew, even larger crowds gathered. The protests turned violent, with public anger directed at politicians' houses, businesses, and government institutions such as Singha Durbar, courts, and police stations.<sup>14</sup> The scale of unrest forced the Prime Minister to resign, bringing down the government. In the aftermath, Gen Z (those with proper digital access) turned to online platforms to discuss potential leaders. On September 12, an interim government was

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<sup>9</sup> Balen Shah, "Gen Z Protest", Facebook, 7 September, 2025, <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/169vSthzoo/>

<sup>10</sup> Kantipur, "के हुँदैछ आन्दोलनमा ? कहाँ कहाँ के भइरहेको छ ?" 8 September, 2025, <https://ekantipur.com/news/2025/09/08/latest-update-gen-g-on-the-streets-to-protest-the-social-media-shutdown-02-28.html>

<sup>11</sup> BBC News, "जेन जी प्रदर्शनका क्रममा मारिएको सङ्ख्या कम्तीमा १९, देशभर विभिन्न स्थानमा कर्फ्यू", BBC News Nepali, 8 September, 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/nepali/articles/c4gzpjlnpzeo>

<sup>12</sup> Setopati, "Police fire tear gas inside Civil Hospital premises", Setopati, 8 September, 2025, <https://en.setopati.com/political/165160>

<sup>13</sup> Setopati, "आजको घटनामा प्रधानमन्त्री ओलीको वक्तव्य- १५ दिनभित्र प्रतिवेदन पेस हुने गरी छानबिन समिति बनाइने", Setopati, 8 September, 2025, <https://www.setopati.com/politics/368754>

<sup>14</sup> BBC, "Nepal's parliament set on fire after PM resigns over anti-corruption protests", BBC News, <https://www.bbc.com/news/live/c741n80ndlxt>



formed under the leadership of former Chief Justice Sushila Karki, who was appointed as the first female Prime Minister of Nepal.<sup>15</sup>

## Methodology:

Body & Data systematically monitored and collected a total of ninety news articles, opinion pieces, and social media posts. The content was gathered using a combination of manual and automated searches with specific keywords and hashtags, including but not limited to: "GenZ Protest", "Nepal Protest", "Social Media Ban Nepal", "End corruption".

Our sources were categorised into three groups to ensure a balanced perspective and to facilitate a comparative analysis:

1. National News Media:  
We focused on major Nepali news outlets, including The Kantipur, Naya Patrika, Setopati, and The Kathmandu Post, but our sources were not limited to them. This selection allowed us to capture the dominant narratives and professional reporting within the country.
2. International News Media:  
To provide a global context and compare perspectives, we analysed content from prominent international news organisations such as The New York Times, CNN, and Al Jazeera. These outlets were chosen for their significant global reach and established presence in covering international news events.
3. Social Media Platforms:  
We examined a purposive sample of content from key social media platforms, including Instagram, TikTok, X (formerly Twitter), YouTube and Facebook. This helped us understand public sentiment and grassroots discourse outside of traditional media.

Our analysis was conducted using a critical feminist lens, employing thematic analysis of news reports and social media posts. This multi-layered approach enabled us to move beyond a simple

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<sup>15</sup> Anil Giri, Nepal appoints Sushila Karki as first female executive head, The Kathmandu Post, 13 September 2025, <https://kathmandupost.com/politics/2025/09/13/nepal-appoints-sushila-karki-as-first-female-executive-head>

description of media coverage to an in-depth interpretation of underlying power dynamics and ideological framings.

Thematic analysis was our primary qualitative method. The themes were developed inductively, meaning they emerged directly from the data rather than being pre-determined. Key themes we anticipated identifying include misinformation, disinformation and fear mongering. The insights and trends identified through this analysis form the basis of our findings, providing a nuanced and multi-dimensional understanding of the role of media within the current media landscape.

While our methodology was designed to provide a strong framework for critical analysis, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations. The timeframe of data collection constrains the scope of our research. By focusing on the week after the protest, we may not have captured the immediate, real-time reactions or the long-term evolution of the media narrative. Additionally, while our purposive sampling of social media posts aimed to capture influential content that represented the general discourse, it cannot represent the entire public discourse, which is vast, dynamic and ever-changing.

## **Rise of Misinformation and Disinformation During Time of Unrest**

While often used interchangeably, misinformation and disinformation are different because of their intent. Misinformation spreads as well-intentioned people share unverified rumors. Conversely, disinformation is used to exploit fear and uncertainty. This distinction is important to understand the nuances during times of crisis. During periods of civil unrest or crisis, the vacuum of verified information increases misinformation and disinformation.

As people transition from traditional media, their online spaces are becoming saturated with content designed to provoke and mislead. Individuals both within the country and abroad are faced with the challenge of navigating a deluge of unreliable information to find credible news.<sup>16</sup> Disinformation is a weaponized form of information, designed to deepen divisions, incite violence, and erode trust in institutions. While misinformation can create the same effect even without the intent. This creates a feedback loop where emotionally charged, sensational disinformation and

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<sup>16</sup> Boju Bajai. 2025. "Take 70: Fake Images and Conspiracy Theories Swirl around Nepal's Gen Z Protests." Cold Takes by Boju Bajai. <https://bojubajai.substack.com/p/take-70-fake-images-and-conspiracy>.

misinformation are readily shared, amplifying panic and fear. Due to this, it becomes difficult to distinguish what is fact and fiction. This has been observed in the recent Gen Z protest as well.

## Misportrayal of the Gen Z Protest

Several international news organisations, including the Associated Press<sup>17</sup>, The Hindu<sup>18</sup>, The Economic Times<sup>19</sup> and others, published news with a misleading narrative about the Gen Z protests, incorrectly portraying the social media ban as the primary cause. This framing is a significant misrepresentation of the core issues. Though the ban acted as an obvious catalyst, it represented only the "tip of the iceberg." The real cause behind the protests lay in longstanding frustrations with pervasive corruption, economic disparity and systemic shortcomings.

It is particularly concerning that even a channel like the Reuters<sup>20</sup>, India Today<sup>21</sup> and The Week<sup>22</sup>, despite acknowledging corruption, dedicated disproportionate coverage to the social media ban, thereby downplaying the fundamental issues at the heart of the movement. Such a kind of selective focus risks shaping public perception around a trigger point rather than the systemic problems. The

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<sup>17</sup> Gurubacharya, Binaj. 2025. "Nepal's Prime Minister Oli quits after violent protests over social media ban." AP News, September 10, 2025. <https://apnews.com/article/nepal-protest-social-media-ban-89cf500969536cf2a35c3fb884cfa620>.

<sup>18</sup> Purtika Dua, "Why Nepal's Gen Z are protesting: what triggered the unrest, how government responded, and what we know so far", The Hindu, Sep 9, 2025, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/why-nepals-gen-z-are-protesting-what-triggered-the-unrest-how-government-responded-and-what-we-know-so-far/article70028905.ece>

<sup>19</sup> ET Online, "Nepal Gen Z protest: 19 protestors dead, 250+ injured as police stop demonstrators breaking into Parliament", September 8, 2025, [https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/nepal-gen-z-protest-9-protestors-dead-as-police-stop-demonstrators-breaking-into-nepal-parliament/articleshow/123763119.cms?utm\\_source=contentofinterest&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=cppst](https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/nepal-gen-z-protest-9-protestors-dead-as-police-stop-demonstrators-breaking-into-nepal-parliament/articleshow/123763119.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst)

<sup>20</sup> 'Gen Z' protests over social media ban in Nepal turn deadly, Reuters, Sep 9, 2025, <https://youtu.be/4CoONYoS5Ys?si=pomDS6JJQqlzAuUO>

<sup>21</sup> India Today, "Why Nepal banned social media? All about the move that sparked GenZ revolution", India Today, September 9 2025, <https://www.indiatoday.in/world/story/why-nepal-banned-social-media-whatsapp-tiktok-facebook-genz-revolution-2783741-2025-09-08>

<sup>22</sup> Rafi Schwartz, "Why Gen Z in Nepal is dying over a state social media ban", The Week, September 9, 2025, <https://theweek.com/world-news/nepal-gen-z-social-media-protest-kathmandu>

emphasis on social media bans over corruption and inequality by major media outlets diverted attention from the structural reforms the protesters were demanding.

Some outlets even framed the protest as a pro-monarchy agitation with a misleading headline, “Return of the King? A Look at Current Status of Nepal's Royal Family”.<sup>23</sup> Such a portrayal of movement in another way distorts public perception of the real issues. Apart from news outlets, the general public also fueled up social media with misleading posts of former King Gyanendra



Shah taking over the throne once again.<sup>24</sup> This theory was further fueled when Ashok Raj Sigdel, Chief of the Army Staff, addressed the general public during the Gen-Z protest in front of the framed photo of the late king Prithvi Narayan Shah. Regardless of its context, the use of the photo of the late king was seen by many as being strategically used to suggest an institutional backing for the pro-monarchy narrative.

This deliberate misconstruction starkly contrasted with the reality on the ground, where protestors had explicitly and repeatedly rejected any pro-monarchy agendas, highlighting the disconnect between the media's manufactured spectacle and the movement's true purpose. This media narrative, often fueled by unverified sources like shared screenshots of private conversations, caused widespread fear. As a result, many people felt compelled to publicly voice their disapproval of the monarchy on their social media platforms.

The way the media was used did more than just misportray the agenda, it actively manufactured a false narrative, likely to sensationalise the



<sup>23</sup> "Return of the King? A Look at Current Status of Nepal's Royal Family," NDTV World, September 9, 2025, <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/return-of-the-king-a-look-at-current-status-of-nepals-royal-family/ar-AA1McRGg>

<sup>24</sup> Sankhar Kshetri, "Breaking: अन्तरिम सरकारलाई ज्ञानेन्द्र शाहले सपथ गराउने दिशामा देशअघि बढ्यो !", Facebook, 11 September 2025, <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1EP7HurDxP/>



event for higher engagement and to delegitimise the protest by shifting the public's focus away from its core issues.

## Fearmongering

The Gen-Z protest revealed how quickly emotionally charged disinformation can spread, serving as a tool of fearmongering. The lack of credible, verifiable sources created an information vacuum that was exploited by unverified claims circulated through private messages and calls. During a period of widespread unrest and heightened emotions, the public is vulnerable to manipulative narratives.

On the night of September 11, a Facebook live video claimed armoured military vehicles were heading to Kathmandu, causing alarm. The video, shared by Tej Bikram Karki, showed a vehicle without a number plate and suggested it was unusual. Later, it was confirmed that vehicles were on a routine logistics movement from Simara to the Panchkhal Peacekeeping camp for UN mission equipment. Such misinformation, pointing towards the army taking over the country during a period of unrest, created unnecessary panic, amplified fear, and affected public trust in state institutions.

Misinformation and disinformation during the protests went beyond just shaping the narrative. For



example, false reports, particularly the one about men sexually assaulting and damaging property at the hostel, created widespread fear among hostel residents. These messages were observed to be shared via screenshots of messages, voice memos and on social media stories. Because these claims spread so quickly, there was no immediate way to verify or disprove them, which only intensified the panic and a feeling of helplessness until they were later proven false.

A lot of information, with or without intent, was observed to be circulated online. Such as the false reports that 35 skeletons were discovered in Chuchhepati Bhatbhateni. However, police later confirmed that six burnt bodies were actually found.<sup>25</sup> While a tragic event did occur, the initial, inflated number of "skeletons" was more sensational and therefore more likely to generate panic by making the situation seem more out of control and dangerous. Furthermore, the famous YouTuber Tanka Dahal, Singer Shiva Pariyar and YouTuber Bhagya Neupane had spread unconfirmed news of 32 persons detained and found dead inside the parliament building. This spread of misinformation created fear among people, but it was later confirmed to be fake.<sup>26</sup> The spread of these types of information plays on existing anxieties about safety, authority, and the stability of the state, making people feel vulnerable.

Similarly, the media narratives and social media flow even targeted the identity and legitimacy of people involved in the movement. Rumours circulated that activist Sudan Gurung<sup>27</sup> was an Indian agent, fueled by several viral videos.<sup>28</sup> The confusion arose from a different activist with a similar name, one involved in Darjeeling's Gorkhaland movement. Although media and social media amplified the claim, fact-checks later confirmed that Gurung is a Nepali citizen actively engaged in domestic social work.<sup>29</sup> It is an example of fearmongering through the targeting of a movement's identity and legitimacy. This tactic is particularly dangerous because it does not just discredit a single person, but it seeks to sow distrust and division within the entire protest movement and among the public. The claim of being an "Indian agent" in a country like Nepal, where historical and geopolitical tensions with India exist, exploits pre-existing nationalistic sentiments and anxieties about foreign influence. For a public already grappling with a chaotic and uncertain

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<sup>25</sup> Pravin Bhatta, "भ्रममा नपर्नुस्, चुच्चेपाटीको भाटभटेनीमा ३५ जनाको कंकाल भेटिएको छैन", Nepal Fact Check, Sep 14, 2025, <https://nepalfactcheck.org/2025/09/bhatbhateni-35-skeleton-claim-misleading/>

<sup>26</sup> Setopati, "संसद भवनभित्र ३२ जना मृत फेला परेको सूचना भ्रामक: प्रहरी", Setopati, Sep 10, 2025, <https://www.setopati.com/politics/368951>

<sup>27</sup> Sudan Gurung is a Nepalese civic activist who founded Hami Nepal, an organization at the forefront of the country's Gen Z-led protests. He played a crucial role in mobilizing thousands of young people online, as Hami Nepal coordinates with the government.

<sup>28</sup> @missionpm2. "अब देश बिदेशी दलाल को हातमा जान लगेको छ होसियार." TikTok, Sep 11, 2025. <https://www.tiktok.com/@missionpm2/video/7548820394145303815>

<sup>29</sup> Nepse Bajar, "सुदन गुरुङ भारतीय एजेन्ट हुन् भन्ने हल्लाको वास्तविकता के हो?", Nepse Bajar, Sep 12, 2025, <https://www.nepsebajar.com/details/65691>

situation, this creates doubt and suspicion, making them question the very cause they might otherwise support.

## **Authority, Accountability, and the Spread of Disinformation**

When individuals in influential positions share unverified and misleading content, the consequences are far more harmful. To ensure accountability, regardless of their status, it is essential to foster civic awareness, provide credible information, and encourage citizens to exercise thoughtful judgment before disseminating information.

The mayor of Dharan, Harka Sampang, reposted a five-day-old video of the Gen-Z protest on September 13. The video, originally posted by a page called Manu Pitha, was shared by the mayor without any new information, leading to confusion among viewers. In the comments, people warned him not to "incite" or "provoke" the public with outdated information<sup>30</sup>.

Similarly, on September 18, CPN-UML leader Mahesh Basnet shared a Facebook video claiming that the Mayor of Kathmandu Metropolitan City, Balen Shah's ancestral home in Mahottari had been vandalised.<sup>31</sup> However, it was later confirmed that the house actually belonged to Ram Padarath Sah Teli, Chairperson of Brahmapuri Rural Municipality in Sarlahi, which was attacked during the Gen-Z protest on September 9.<sup>32</sup>

These incidents demonstrate how a simple failure to verify information can lead even trusted leaders to spread misinformation, confusing the public and potentially escalating tensions. Public figures with a large following can easily cause confusion and public agitation, especially when they are political leaders.

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<sup>30</sup> Techpana, "जेन-जी प्रदर्शनमा' भन्दै ५ दिन पुरानो भोडिओ राखेर भ्रम फैलाउँदै हर्क सामपाङ", Techpana, 13 September, 2025,

[https://techpana.com/2025/153074/?fbclid=IwY2xjawM1tu9leHRuA2FlbQIxmABicmlkETFPSWhkQ25YdFowWwFQb084AR7xqMPPmoOPYOzDfQRxCvmHGDTUTUeOYPUjlDboOYvKH8-qZTh3gNjgPEptSA\\_aem\\_A25RAx\\_MK-lhcG9MxLHiWQ](https://techpana.com/2025/153074/?fbclid=IwY2xjawM1tu9leHRuA2FlbQIxmABicmlkETFPSWhkQ25YdFowWwFQb084AR7xqMPPmoOPYOzDfQRxCvmHGDTUTUeOYPUjlDboOYvKH8-qZTh3gNjgPEptSA_aem_A25RAx_MK-lhcG9MxLHiWQ)

<sup>31</sup> Mahesh Basnet, "महोत्तरीमा बालेन शाहको घरमा तोडफोड भएछ भनि सुनियो", Facebook, September 18, 2025, <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1FuDDpsWVC/>

<sup>32</sup> Unnat Sapkota, "टेकपाना फ्याक्टचेक: महेश बस्नेतले भनेजस्तो तोडफोड भएको छैन बालेन शाहको घर, के हो वास्तविकता?", Techpana, 18 September 2025, <https://techpana.com/2025/153153/factcheck-mahesh-basnet-claim-balen-shah-house-demolition-false>

## False Narratives by Indian Media During Nepal's Gen Z Protest

Indian media coverage during Nepal's Gen Z protest shows a pattern of sensationalism and political interference, often projecting its own domestic agenda onto a local movement. Instead of reporting on the core grievances of the youth, Indian media outlets and individuals frequently misrepresented the protests as a campaign for a Hindu Rashtra, downplaying the deeper issues of corruption and systemic inequality. This misrepresentation was amplified by a significant number of Indian social media users, leading to the spread of misinformation.<sup>33</sup>

NDTV India, for example, shared an old video of a religious festival, falsely claiming that protesters had vandalised the Pashupatinath Temple.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, outlets like Dainik Jagran ran headlines like “Army handles situation in Nepal, Gen Z wants a Hindu Rashtra,”<sup>35</sup> a claim that was entirely baseless and intended to reinforce a specific political narrative. This misleading report was designed to inflame Hindu sentiments, risking an escalation of religious tension and portraying the protests as anti-Hindu.

These examples of disinformation reveal a strategic attempt by some Indian media to frame the protests through the lens of their own political landscape, specifically the rising pro-Hindutva sentiments in India. The narrative was further amplified on social media, where social media accounts like 'Hindutva Knight' <sup>36</sup> posted a photo of Yogi Adityanath with the caption, “Gen Z in

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<sup>33</sup> Aishwarya Varma, “Misinform Thy Neighbour: Indian Users Share Fake News Amid Unrest in South Asia”, The Quint, 16 September 2025, <https://www.thequint.com/news/webqoof/indians-share-fake-news-about-nepal-bangladesh-pakistan-protests>

<sup>34</sup> **Nepal Protest News: नेपाल में युवा क्रांति की Inside Story**, NDTV India, Sep 8, 2025, <https://youtu.be/3CAGmRSaJAs?si=B-4EAleNwYZGAmD3>

<sup>35</sup> NL Team, “Nepal’s Gen Z want a Hindu nation. Or do they?”, News Laundry, September 11 2025. <https://www.newslaundry.com/2025/09/11/nepals-gen-z-want-a-hindu-nation-or-do-they>

<sup>36</sup> Hindutva Knight, “Gen Z in Nepal wants something we already have”, X(formerly Twitter), September 10, 2025, <https://x.com/HPhobiaWatch/status/1965823432601543061>

Nepal wants something we already have.”. While 'SBR' tweeted, “New Constitution in 2 months declaring HINDU RASHTRA”.<sup>37</sup>



This disinformation extended beyond religious themes to exploit a period of political instability. In the midst of a political crisis and a sensitive power vacuum, some outlets circulated baseless reports, such as the false claims of the President's resignation and the Army taking control.<sup>38</sup> During the protest, several Indian media outlets, including Mint<sup>39</sup>, ABP News<sup>40</sup>, and The Times of India<sup>41</sup>, circulated false reports claiming that former Prime Minister Jhulanath Khanal's wife, Ravilakshmi Chitrakar, had died following attacks on leaders' residences. These reports, cited even by widely followed YouTube influencers like Dhruv Rathee<sup>42</sup>, were quickly amplified across platforms. Later, the Kirtipur Hospital Director, Kiran Nakarmi, confirmed that she was in critical condition in the ICU. Such false claims not only mislead the public but also risk escalating tensions, reducing trust in media credibility. This incident, and others like it, show the failure of media accountability, where the pursuit of sensationalism takes precedence over truth, eroding public trust in the media.

In response to this misleading coverage, anti-Indian media sentiment grew palpable among. Many protesters say the Indian media reduces their protests to a reaction against the social media ban, ignoring deeper issues like systemic corruption, unemployment, and the concentration of power among the political elite.<sup>43</sup> In the absence of reliable sources of information and the presence of

<sup>37</sup> SBR, “Gen-Z in Nepal raising the heat”, X(formerly Twitter), [Link](#)

<sup>38</sup> Ashish Pandey, “PM KP Oli, President Ramchandra Paudel resign: Nepal's Gen Z uprising, deadly protests and political fallout”, Deccan Herald, September 9, 2025, <https://archive.ph/bf5yN>

<sup>39</sup> Swastika Das Sharma, “Ex-Nepal PM Jhulanath Khanal's wife Rajyalaxmi Chitrakar dies after Gen Z protesters set their house on fire”, Mint, September 9 2025, <https://www.livemint.com/news/world/nepal-protest-ex-nepal-pm-jhulanath-khanal-wife-rajyalaxmi-chitrakar-dies-after-gen-z-protesters-set-house-on-fire-11757424323025.html>

<sup>40</sup> Abp Live, “Ex-Nepal PM Jhulanath Khanal's Wife Burnt Alive After House Set On Fire Amid Gen Z-Led Protests,” Abp News, Sep 9 2025, <https://news.abplive.com/news/world/ex-nepal-pm-jhulanath-khanal-s-wife-burnt-alive-after-house-set-on-fire-amid-gen-z-led-protests-1799464>

<sup>41</sup> TOI World Desk, “Nepal violence: Ex-PM Khanal's wife dies after protesters torch house; president urges calm, dialogue”, The Times of India, September 9 2025, <https://www.msn.com/en-in/news/India/nepal-violence-ex-pm-khanal-s-wife-dies-after-protesters-torch-house-president-urges-calm-dialogue/ar-AA1Md9mt>

<sup>42</sup> Dhruv Rathee, “What's REALLY Happening in Nepal?”, Youtube, September 10, 2025, [https://youtu.be/s-NvCxf6y\\_c?si=VlvJOHIDR7BtVdtx](https://youtu.be/s-NvCxf6y_c?si=VlvJOHIDR7BtVdtx)

<sup>43</sup> Matters India Reporter, “Nepal Protests: Public anger at Indian media” Matters India, September 12 2025, <https://mattersindia.com/2025/09/nepal-protests-public-anger-at-indian-media/>



hidden agendas, misinformation and false narratives can spread more readily. The distrust for Indian media was visible on the streets of Kathmandu, where an Indian reporter and cameraperson covering the protests were surrounded by demonstrators. Eyewitnesses and video footage show protesters chanting slogans such as “Go back, Godi media.”<sup>44</sup> This grassroots backlash highlights the real-world consequences of media narratives that prioritise political agendas, sensationalization and viewer engagement over accuracy.

## **Citizen Journalism in the Gen Z Protest**

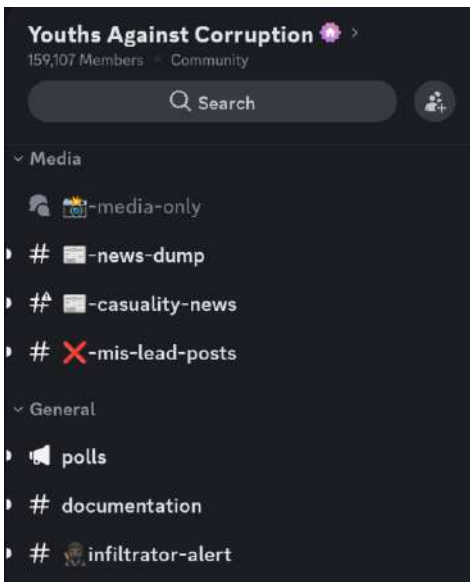
As traditional media failed to capture the grassroots reality of the protests, ordinary people used social media to directly document events and challenge misleading narratives. At the time of the Gen Z protest and afterwards, ordinary people actively documented events, shared real-time updates through social media. The rise of citizen journalism during the Gen Z protest in Nepal revealed a powerful but complex dynamic. It offered a tool for real-time documentation and accountability, but it also exposed the movement to new risks of internal disinformation and external manipulation.

Efforts to document the protest were observed to be done both individually and collectively. One of the most popular public spaces for this was the Discord server "Youths Against Corruption." Within this server, there are dedicated channels for posting media, news, and debunking misleading posts, as well as a channel specifically for documentation. Social media platforms like Facebook and TikTok were also actively used to document events live and spread information quickly. This helped to decentralise how information was shared and consumed. While these online spaces enabled the public to document the protests in real-time, they were also used by many to create a climate of fear, which was exacerbated by the lack of fact-checking. To the

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<sup>44</sup> Sakshi Joshi, “GODI MEDIA IN NEPAL | GODI MEDIA INSULT IN NEPAL”, Youtube, September 13 2025, [https://youtu.be/5kqb\\_j5R83A?si=Nz4iIXTSfcQcW0om](https://youtu.be/5kqb_j5R83A?si=Nz4iIXTSfcQcW0om)

Kathmandu Post, journalist Namrata Shrestha shared, “Citizen journalism can be a powerful tool,



but without verification, it can also become a vector for misinformation.”<sup>45</sup>

After many national and international outlets framed the protest as a reaction to the ban on social media, youth voices and social media content helped to reframe it.<sup>46</sup> As mentioned by the “Week”, a protester said, “We were triggered by the social media ban, but that is not the only reason we are gathered here. We are protesting against corruption that has been institutionalised in Nepal.”<sup>47</sup> The active role of citizens, witnesses, and protest organisers in countering false and misleading information plays a

crucial role in safeguarding the motto and integrity of the movement.

Gen Z protests can be used to understand how social and political movements are documented and understood. While citizen journalism provided an immediate record of events and brought out grassroots reality and narratives, its reliance on a decentralised, unverified network exposed the movement to larger risks of misinformation and disinformation.

## Role of Media in the Gen Z Protest

Traditional media, local outlets and platforms accessed by online users have all contributed to the Gen Z protest in Nepal. Gen Z protests in Nepal illustrate the strategic use of social media not merely as a communication tool but as a central arena for political framing and mobilization. Drawing inspiration from global digital activism, such as the "nepo baby" discourse and similar movements in Southeast Asia, Nepali youth effectively leveraged platforms to articulate their

<sup>45</sup> Aarati Ray, “How misinformation fuelled panic during Gen Z uprising”, The Kathmandu Post, September 15, 2025, <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2025/09/15/how-misinformation-fuelled-panic-during-gen-z-uprising>

<sup>46</sup> Mohak Mangal, “Gen-Z Revolution vs Nepal Government”, Youtube, September 17, 2025, <https://youtu.be/EwXAz8MJ5l8?si=INeDYfJmRNQkZ9tr>

<sup>47</sup> The Week News Desk, “Nepal's social media bans and corruption: What actually triggered Gen Z protests in Baneshwar, Kathmandu?”, The Week, September 8, 2025, <https://www.theweek.in/news/world/2025/09/08/nepals-social-media-bans-and-corruption-what-actually-triggered-gen-z-protests-in-baneshwar-kathmandu.html>

grievances.<sup>48</sup> For this, online discussions, content sharing, and the use of hashtags became the primary tools of resistance. The particular hashtags like #NepoKids, #ByeNepoBabies, #endcorruption and #CorruptionFreeNepal spread rapidly, framing “nepo kids” as symbols of privilege and entrenched corruption. This strategic framing was instrumental in creating an online public space where youths shared a narrative of injustice, transforming individual frustrations into a collective and highly visible movement. The viral spread of these hashtags demonstrates how digital platforms can facilitate the formation of networked publics, enabling rapid, large-scale engagement that bypasses traditional media gatekeepers and governmental control.

The government's ban on social media was seen as not an isolated act but a strategic effort to disrupt protest coordination and control the narrative. It was seen as an attempt at censorship and an attack on free speech. Social media was not only a communication tool but also an arena of identity formation and political consciousness. Despite the government's attempts to silence digital spaces, Gen Z protests against corruption were discussed on social media.<sup>49</sup> The ban on social media platforms did not dissuade outrage but fueled VPN usage and decentralised communication. One of the most popular spaces for youths to gather was Discord (despite it being included in the ban list), which quickly became the central hub of coordination.<sup>50</sup>

Discord servers were used by the protestors for logistical planning, offering a private space for managing helplines and real-time support. The server “Youth against Corruption” managed the discussion for the protest and their mobilisation. The server also held multiple backup servers. At the same time, platforms like TikTok and Instagram were used as a public-facing front to sustain momentum. The use of memes and short videos made the protest message highly accessible and shareable, converting passive online users into active participants and keeping the issue visible in the public eye.

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<sup>48</sup> Vinod Janardhanan, “When Gen Z protests, heads roll: From Nepal to Indonesia and beyond, TikTok generation leads change in politics dominated by the old and senile”, WION, 9 September, 2025, <https://www.wionews.com/world/when-gen-z-protests-heads-roll-from-nepal-to-indonesia-and-beyond-tiktok-generation-leads-change-in-politics-dominated-by-the-old-and-senile-1757401084536>

<sup>49</sup> AJ Dellinger, “Nepal Currently Being Run Via Discord After Gen Z Uprising” GIZMODO, 12 September, 2025, <https://gizmodo.com/nepal-currently-being-run-via-discord-after-gen-z-uprising-2000658243>

<sup>50</sup> India Today Video Desk, “How Discord-led dissent toppled KP Sharma Oli's government in Nepal”, India Today, <https://www.indiatoday.in/programme/5ive-live/video/how-discord-led-dissent-toppled-kp-sharma-olis-government-in-nepal-2785886-2025-09-11>

One of the most defining and globally visible moments of the protest was the symbolic “Discord election” organised by Gen Z. When mainstream political institutions were dysfunctional and the Oli government had lost legitimacy, thousands of youth on Discord servers conducted mock elections to elect an interim prime minister.<sup>51</sup> Though the results had no legal authority, the exercise served as a symbolic rejection of the older generation. The novelty of holding an election through a gaming chat platform captured international headlines. However, choosing someone as the next prime minister on the basis of internet access may not be acceptable to everyone and may fail to reflect the will of all. Beyond the valley and cities, many still lack access to the internet and mobile phones. Overriding their voices marginalises the vulnerable and excludes them from practising democracy.

After two days of violent protest, the country was pushed into a political vacuum, where fears of a monarchy comeback, foreign interference, and the rise of competing forces were circulating. Although Discord was chosen as a democratic platform, its limited number of participants, restricted accessibility, valley-centric focus, and decisions influenced by external fears meant it was not truly democratic. The moderators appointed by the server’s creator further imposed undemocratic voting processes, turning a grassroots fight against exploitation into something dominated by elites and those with greater digital access. The portrayal of discord as democratic participation, making international headlines, does not feel democratic to all the people of Nepal, who fought for the very notion of ending corruption.<sup>52</sup>

This raised questions about accountability and ownership, especially since these online spaces are not accessible to everyone across all social classes. Those who are unaware of meetings and decisions organised by certain groups cannot feel a sense of ownership over such choices, even if they are celebrated as the victory of a revolution.

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<sup>51</sup> Vishwam Sankaran, “Sushila Karki: How Gen Z protestors chose Nepal’s first woman prime minister on Discord”, The Independent, 13 September, 2025, <https://www.msn.com/en-za/news/other/sushila-karki-how-gen-z-protestors-chose-nepal-s-first-woman-prime-minister-on-discord/ar-AA1Mtd3Y?ocid=BingNewsVerp>

<sup>52</sup> Kriti, “Documenting the Gen Z Revolution in Nepal from the Working Class Lens”, Medium, September 15, 2025, <https://medium.com/@itikriti07/documenting-the-gen-z-revolution-in-nepal-from-the-working-class-lens-d040372c3c04>

## Conclusion

The media in Nepal's Gen Z protest shaped both the movement's form and substance by channelling outrage, enabling organisation, and questioning injustices. Social media played a dual role. On the one hand, it helped Gen Z organise the protest and amplify their voices. On the other hand, it also fueled misinformation and disinformation, with false reports of deaths, army crackdowns, and pro-monarchy rallies spreading quickly. The failure of official sources to provide timely updates only worsened the problem, driving the public to rely on unverified information. The core issue, therefore, is not a lack of platforms but a failure of accountability within mainstream media and a critical gap in public digital literacy. The challenge moving forward is not simply to document events but to address the fundamental lack of accountability from traditional media and the widespread digital illiteracy that makes the public vulnerable to manipulation. Further studies should move beyond simple observation to investigate the deeper implications and nuances of digital symbols like the Straw Hat Pirates' Jolly Roger<sup>53</sup>, the online co-option and hijacking of movements, the roles of social media influencers during times of unrest, the rise of sexism and how the digital divide impacts grassroots participation.

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<sup>53</sup> In the world of One Piece, the Jolly Roger is a pirate flag which symbolizes the crew's identity and dreams. As a powerful emblem of faith, it communicates that nothing is impossible. For characters like Monkey D. Luffy, the Jolly Roger represents freedom from the oppressive World Government. This emotional connection is so strong that losing the flag is akin to losing a crewmate.





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