

GLOBAL UP-TO-DATE

A Monthly Newsletter by Centre for Governance Studies



CONTRIBUTORS

1. Shamsul Arif Fahim

Research Assistant (CGS)

2. Nuzhat Tabassum

Program Assistant (CGS)

3. Tanzila Hosain Tonny

Research Intern (CGS)

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Roman Uddin

Research Associate

A CGS Publication

The world around us is changing rapidly. Wars, new turn in global politics, human rights issues are occurring every day, posing new challenges and concerns. Global Up-to-Date is an initiative by Centre for Governance Studies (CGS) which will work as a hub for explaining the contemporary global issues.

The regular briefs will focus and explain the issues related to International Politics, Economy, Security, Human Rights, and Development. There will be a monthly printed version newsletter containing briefs of all the contemporary global important issues. The online version contains regular updates of the pressing issues along with the PDF version of the news letter.

Note: The views expressed in this newsletter are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the policies of CGS.

Nepal's Gen-Z Movement: Digital Activism and Political Transformation

Shamsul Arif Fahim



In September 2025, Nepal experienced a major political mobilization led by Gen Z, marking one of the most significant youth-driven movements in the country's recent history. Similar to earlier youth-led uprisings in South Asia, such as the July 2024 student protests in Bangladesh and civic movements in Sri Lanka, young Nepalese used digital platforms to organize and amplify their demands for accountability, transparency, and systemic reform. This movement reflects a broader regional trend in which digitally connected youth challenge traditional political structures, combining online activism with street-level demonstrations to influence national governance.

The roots of this mobilization lie in Nepal's complex political evolution. Nepal transitioned from a 240-year-old monarchy under the Shah dynasty to a federal democratic republic when the monarchy was abolished on 28 May 2008. The interim constitution of January 2007 had already stripped the king of powers and set transitional governance structures, but persistent instability and weak institutions hindered effective reforms. A permanent constitution was promulgated on 20 September 2015, establishing a secular federal republic with seven provinces, a bicameral legislature, and a president as head of state. Despite these reforms, political instability persisted, with frequent changes in government, ongoing corruption, nepotism, and elite-driven policymaking. Regional influences from China and India further complicated Nepal's political landscape. Within this context, the government's decision in September 2025 to ban 26 social media platforms, including Facebook, YouTube, and X, was widely perceived as an attempt to suppress dissent and restrict information, sparking widespread frustration among young, digitally connected citizens.

This combination of long-standing grievances and immediate triggers set the stage for a mass, decentralized youth-led movement across Nepal.

On 08 September 2025, thousands of young Nepalese occupied the streets of the capital Kathmandu, later spreading to other cities. The movement was decentralized and leaderless just like the July Uprising' 24 in Bangladesh, coordinated mainly through online platforms and private chat groups such as Discord. The young Nepalese protesters carried symbolic placards demanding "Youth Against Corruption"; "Dictators fear Wi-Fi" and "Save the Future" orchestrating a generational outrage on the old political settlement and demand immediate and long term reform. By September 09, the demonstration escalated dramatically as crowds stormed the Federal Parliament building. But security force responded heartlessly with tear gas, rubber bullet, and even live ammunition. Then the clashes between the mass and loyal force of the repressive state turned deadly, with more than 70 deaths and over 2,000 injuries reported nationwide. The hospitals struggled to treat victims, many of them teenagers and students.

Amid escalating chaos, the situation spiraled out of control. Over 13,000 prisoners escaped during the unrest, and government offices were vandalized, further undermining the state authority. Prime Minister K. P. Sharma Oli resigned after facing immense pressure that marking the collapse of his government. After the collapse of Oli's regime, former Chief Justice Sushila Karki was appointed interim Prime Minister in mid-September with restoring stability and organizing election. The social media ban was lifted, and partially meeting protester's demands, though skepticism remained about the sincerity of reforms.

However, the protests inspired a new wave of civic engagement just like the young blood of Bangladesh in the same geopolitical region. Thousands of young Nepalese registered to vote ahead of the March 2026 elections, signaling a shift from street protests to institutional participation and notably political voices. For many, this is the first genuine chance for young people to change Nepal's stagnant political culture. Unfortunately, frustration has tempered optimism. Reforms are still progressing slowly a month after the revolt, and young people are underrepresented in the interim cabinet. Although the old political order has been shaken, critics argue that it still opposes substantive reform. The legitimacy of the interim government has also been questioned by major parties that were excluded, raising concerns that political instability may resurface.

The Gen Z protests in Nepal are a reflection of a broader worldwide trend in which young people with access to digital devices are using spontaneous mobilization to challenge establishment. The movement showed how digital authoritarianism can quickly turn into a national political crisis and how traditional institutions frequently struggle to adjust to such fluid activism. Nevertheless, the international community has largely welcomed the interim government's efforts to stabilize Nepal, but questions remain about accountability for deaths, judicial independence, and security sector reform.

As the country prepares for elections in 2026, the key question is whether Nepal can channel this youth-driven energy into sustainable democratic reform or if disillusionment will once again prevail. The uprising has already reshaped the nation's political narrative.

For Nepal's young generation, it was more than a protest. It was a declaration that their voices can no longer be ignored.

Summit of Fire: Israeli Airstrike and Gulf Geopolitics

Nuzhat Tabassum



Photo: Jacqueline Penney / AFP

On September 9, 2025, the Middle East witnessed the most shocking incident in history as Israel launched an airstrike in Doha, Qatar, referred to as the “Summit of Fire”, targeting senior members of Hamas involved in ongoing cease-fire talks of Gaza. The strike left six people dead, including a Qatari security officer, and wounded several others. The airstrike came at such a moment when Qatar was trying to mediate a ceasefire between Hamas and Israel, thereby hindering Qatar’s efforts to bring peace in Gaza. On September 15, 2025, the Arab-Islamic summit in Doha convened after the incident and suggested that all member states reassess their diplomatic relations, implement sanctions, and stop arms deliveries to Israel. Despite condemnation from Qatar and other Arab-Islamic states, Israel’s policies are not expected to change. It is also unlikely that the USA will take any formal action against Israel.

Israel has historically conducted operations targeting Hamas leaders in other countries, at times raising concerns regarding national sovereignty, such as the attempted assassination of Ismail Haniyeh in Iran. In a similar context, Israel sought to neutralize senior Hamas negotiators, including Khaled Meshaal, former head of the organization’s political bureau, and its current acting chair, Khalil al-Hayya. The September 9 airstrike, however, did not achieve this objective. Although Qatar has been a close partner of the United States for several decades, it has maintained its engagement with Israel. The Middle East policy under former U.S. President Donald Trump continued to emphasize strong

support for Israel, the advancement of commercial agreements with Gulf states, and the implementation of the Abraham Accords, which established economic, commercial, and security partnerships between Israel and Gulf countries. The broader U.S. strategy in the region has focused on securing national interests and maintaining regional security, while generally refraining from intervening in Israel's actions in Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, and Iran.

In a trilateral call with US President Donald Trump, Benjamin Netanyahu, and Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdul Rahman Al Thani following the airstrike, Israel expressed regret for the death of a Qatari security officer and its violation of its sovereignty, and it promised not to repeat the incident. However, after the call, Netanyahu has faced severe criticism from his own country. Despite the attack, Qatar has not officially relinquished its position as mediator. The United States has encouraged Doha to continue its mediation efforts, citing the strategic benefits previously derived from Qatar's facilitation of negotiations.

Israel's actions have contributed to perceptions of insecurity and instability in the Gulf region. The country is viewed as prioritizing military objectives over regional cohesion, while Gulf states continue to emphasize stability, economic development, and infrastructure growth. The strike makes Qatar anxious about becoming one of the many Arab nations that have experienced Israeli military action. The strike has been regarded by GCC members as an assault on all GCC nations. Since the blockade of Qatar five years ago, which was led by Saudi Arabia and the Emiratis, the GCC countries have become more coordinated and unified. The Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman denounced Israel's actions and declared their solidarity with Doha, while UAE President Mohammed bin Zayed visited Doha a day after the attack. However, the USA's stand on this issue was disappointing to the GCC countries. GCC countries have considered the USA their primary security guarantor. However, a number of US Middle East policies, together with Israel's most recent attack on Qatar, are progressively escalating Gulf monarchies' skepticism regarding the US security umbrella's dependability. If a strong US ally like Qatar came under an attack by another close US ally, Israel, there might be another country that would be attacked and would face no repercussions.

In order to address the member states' security concerns, the GCC countries held an emergency summit in Doha and committed to evaluating the GCC's defense posture, implementing cooperative defense structures, and utilizing Gulf deterrent capabilities. There were no immediate announcements of economic or political sanctions against Israel. However, GCC defense ministers announced a number of security and defense measures, including improved intelligence sharing, coordinated air surveillance, an accelerated joint early warning system, updated joint defense plans, and joint air defense exercises. The ministers also reaffirmed their complete support for Qatar's right to self-defense. Besides this, Qatar and other Arab - Islamic countries have limited options to safeguard themselves. One option Qatar can take is to pull back from the ceasefire negotiations. But experts believe that this method will only be useful to punish the USA, not Israel, as they have little regard for international norms. Another option they have is to put economic pressure on Israel's allies, mainly the USA and Europe, as they have a significant amount of investments in Europe and the USA.

The assault on Qatar on September 9th by Israel demonstrates why Saudi Arabia, its neighbor, has

been pressing for a formal defense alliance with the US. The Gulf nations and Washington do not have any formal security agreements. The Doha incident highlights the importance of prioritizing enhanced Gulf security over inter-Gulf politics and competition. To improve collective security, a strong bloc like the GCC should be able to use its vast financial and military resources strategically.

The attack on Doha exposed the fragility of regional security and the limits of U.S. influence in the Gulf. The incident underscores the need for Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries to strengthen their own security frameworks, rather than relying solely on U.S. support. It is also important for member states to advocate for formalized security agreements with the United States, rather than relying on informal understandings, to enhance mutual trust and accountability. For Qatar, the primary challenge lies in maintaining its role as a mediator without undermining its credibility or appearing complicit. More broadly, the incident suggests a shift in regional dynamics, where military capability increasingly influences interactions and negotiations. Israel's "Summit of Fire" may have lasting implications for Gulf-Israel relations and could reshape regional perspectives on alliances, collective security, and state sovereignty in the Middle East.

Corruption Sparked a Nationwide Movement in Philippine

Tanzila Hosain Tonny



Photo: AFP

In September 2025, the Philippines was swept into one of its most powerful civic uprisings in recent years, after revelations of massive corruption in the country's flood-control projects ignited widespread public outrage. What began as disclosures of irregularities in government-funded infrastructure quickly evolved into a national reckoning, as citizens from students and church groups to professionals and community leaders, poured into the streets demanding accountability and systemic reform. The scandal, which exposed "ghost" projects, substandard construction, and billions of pesos in suspected

kickbacks, not only underscored deep-seated governance failures but also galvanized a movement that challenged the very core of public trust in state institutions. Corruption not only benefits individuals but also collective entities such as political parties, corporations, or groups, including non-financial gains and the preservation or expansion of a person's power and influence. Philippines is extremely vulnerable to natural disasters, with an average of 20 tropical cyclones per year. The governments are attempting to mitigate the damage, but excessive corruption hinders development, as seen by the country's low rating in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index when compared to other Asian countries.

In his July 18 State of the Nation speech, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. first revealed the flood-control corruption issue, stating that just 15 contractors had received ₱100 billion of the ₱500 billion allotted for flood management project. He ordered investigations and established a platform for public reporting, which revealed extensive irregularities and "ghost projects." Later, journalists discovered that several of the companies had connections to influential politicians, such as Congressman Zaldy Company and former Pasig mayoral candidate Sarah Discaya. Public anger over the findings led to protests spearheaded by young people calling for transparency and the return of stolen money.

The demonstrations started on September 4 in Pasig, a city within Metro Manila, the capital region of the Philippines, when protesters set vandalized the DPWH office in Manila and the headquarters of St. Gerrard Construction. Similar demonstrations coordinated by labor and activist groups took place in Cebu, one of the major cities in the central Philippines, on September 5. On September 12, thousands participated in a "Black Friday" (as a respond to corruption) walkout in response to political scandals and human rights violations, making it the greatest student protest at the University of the Philippines as an outbreak. From September 13 to 20, 2025, anti-corruption protests expanded from Metro Manila to Bulacan, Hagonoy, and Baguio City, with demonstrators addressing alleged corruption and failed flood control projects. Students and activists accused President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and former President Rodrigo Duterte of allowing corruption of funds and ignoring public welfare. In 21 September, thousands came together in the Philippines, mainly in Manila, against corruption involving fraud or unsatisfactory flood control projects, with organizers predicting 130,000 attendees. Demonstrations took place in more than 20 sites such as Luneta Park and the EDSA People Power Monument. The rallies were attended by Gen Z, faculty of the universities, civil society, several politicians and catholic church members. The catholic organizations in the Philippines, including Simbayanihan (a faith-based social group led by the Catholic Church in the Philippines), Caritas, and Justice and Peace groups, work to promote advocacy and public participation in a variety of topics.

Over 200 protestors were arrested after confrontations with police during the anti-corruption demonstration in Manila, with 224 prisoners, including a few youngsters. The conflicts injured 131 law enforcement officers, several of officials started medical treatment. As a result, schools closed and a curfew was enforced. More protests are planned as investigations into the flood-control corruption scandal continue, with authorities warning that the situation may become unpredictable.

The date 21 September is significant historically because it marks Ferdinand Marcos Sr.'s (father of the current president) imposition of martial law in 1972, which led of a long period of dictatorship

witnessed by widespread arrests, torture, and killings. In significantly different from his father's stance, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. expressed sympathy for the demonstrators, agreed with the validity of the people's allegations and recognized their freedom to express dissatisfaction. His approach suggests a potential commitment to combating corruption while respecting freedoms of speech, which differs significantly with the brutal strategies of the previous regime. The President has formed an independent panel to investigate alleged corruption in infrastructure projects, including ineffective flood-management infrastructure. He stressed that no one will be free from examination, attempting to reestablish public trust. Ombudsman Jesus Crispin Remulla revealed that around 30 cases involving the DPWH are under preliminary examination as the government prepares to press charges relating to irregularities in flood control projects. However, many citizens believe that genuine accountability and meaningful reform have yet to occur. Demonstrators argue that, despite ongoing investigations, few officials or contractors have been fully held to account. As a result, the anti-corruption movement has persisted, with protests continuing even during major holidays, creating additional challenges for public travel and safety across the country.