iMAP State of Internet Censorship Report 2022

About iMAP

Internet Monitoring Action Project (iMAP) aims to establish regional and in-country networks that monitor network interference and restrictions to the freedom of expression online in 9 countries: Myanmar, Cambodia, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. Sinar Project is currently working with national digital rights partners in these 9 countries. The project is done via Open Observatory Network Interference (OONI) detection and reporting systems, involving the maintenance of test lists and measurements.

More information available at: imap.sinarproject.org. Any enquiries and suggestions about this report can be directed to team@sinarproject.org.

About Sinar Project

Sinar Project is a civic tech initiative using open technology, open data and policy analysis to systematically make important information public and more accessible to the Malaysian people. It aims to improve governance and encourage greater citizen involvement in the public affairs of the nation by making Parliament and the Malaysian Government more open, transparent and accountable. More information available at: https://sinarproject.org.

Glossary

DNS	DNS stands for "Domain Name System" and it maps domain names to IP addresses. A domain is a name that is commonly attributed to websites (when they're created), so that they can be more easily accessed and remembered. For example, twitter.com is the domain of the Twitter website. However, computers can't connect to internet services through domain names, but based on IP addresses: the digital address of each service on the internet. Similarly, in the physical world, you would need the address of a house (rather than the name of the house itself) in order to visit it. The Domain Name System (DNS) is what is responsible for transforming a human- readable domain name (such as ooni.org) into its numerical IP address counterpart (in this case:104.198.14.52), thus allowing your computer to access the intended website.
HTTP	The Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP) is the underlying protocol used by the World Wide Web to transfer or exchange data across the internet. The HTTP protocol allows communication between a client and a server. It does so by handling a client's request to connect to a server, and the server's response to the client's request. All websites include an HTTP (or HTTPS) prefix (such as http://example.com/) so that your computer (the client) can request and receive the content of a website (hosted on a server). The transmission of data over the HTTP protocol is unencrypted.
heuristics	Heuristics obtain further confirmed blockings other than that which are detected based on OONI blocking fingerprints. More detailed explanation here.
ISP	An Internet Service Provider (ISP) is an organization that provides services for accessing and using the internet. ISPs can be state-owned, commercial, community-owned, non-profit, or otherwise privately owned. Vodafone, AT&T, Airtel, and MTN are examples of ISPs.
Middle boxes	A middlebox is a computer networking device that transforms, inspects, filters, or otherwise manipulates traffic for purposes other than packet forwarding.

	Many Internet Service Providers (ISPs) around the world use middleboxes to improve network performance, provide users with faster access to websites, and for a number of other networking purposes. Sometimes though, middleboxes are also used to implement internet censorship and/or surveillance. The OONI Probe app includes two tests designed to measure networks with the aim of identifying the presence of middleboxes.
TCP	The Transmission Control Protocol (TCP) is one of the main protocols on the internet. To connect to a website, your computer needs to establish a TCP connection to the address of that website. TCP works on top of the Internet Protocol (IP), which defines how to address computers on the internet. When speaking to a machine over the TCP protocol you use an IP and port pair, which looks something like this: 10.20.1.1:8080. The main difference between TCP and (another very popular protocol called) UDP is that TCP has the notion of a "connection", making it a "reliable" transport protocol.
TLS	Transport Layer Security (TLS) – also referred to as "SSL" – is a cryptographic protocol that allows you to maintain a secure, encrypted connection between your computer and an internet service. When you connect to a website through TLS, the address of the website will begin with HTTPS (such as https://www.facebook.com/), instead of HTTP.

A comprehensive glossary related to OONI can be accessed here: https://ooni.org/support/glossary/.

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GENERAL OVERVIEW

By Siti Nurliza Samsudin (Sinar Project) and Kelly Koh (Sinar Project)

Executive Summary

Overview of Internet Censorship

There are no countries in the Southeast Asian region that have gained the status of achieving internet freedom considered as "free". Governments in the region are increasingly imposing Internet regulations in a manner that restricts the flow of information across national borders and limits internet freedom.

Despite being a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) that provides protection to the freedom of expression which can only be restricted in limited circumstances of legality, legitimacy and necessity under Article 19(3), the Inter-Ministerial Prakas (proclamation) on Website and Social Media Control was adopted to impose obligation on all internet service providers to install surveillance software to monitor content circulated on the internet. The new National Internet Gateway requiring internet service providers in Cambodia to reroute internet traffic through a regulatory body will enable monitoring of online activity.

Internet freedoms in Hong Kong continue to diminish. The imposition of National Security Law has led to political websites showing dissident contents to be blocked on the grounds of national security.

Indonesia has extensive laws on content removal. Handling of Internet Sites Containing Negative Content Ministerial Regulation No 19 of 2014 enables the Ministry of Information and Communications (Kominfo) to mandate ISPs to block internet content that are deemed to carry negative elements, such as pornography, hoaxes, and issues concerning ethnicity, religion, race and intergroup relations (SARA) conflict. The Electronic Information and Transactions (ITE) Law No 11 of 2008 with its amendment in 2016 under article 40 enables preventative measures to be taken against the dissemination of information, enabling the government to terminate access to information that are deemed to be in violation of laws.

Whilst Malaysia does not have extensive range of legal instruments to restrict internet freedom, nevertheless sections 211 and 233 of the Communications and Multimedia Act 1997 and the Penal Code have often been used on wide range of online contents that are deemed to be offensive, including contents critical of government or satirical artwork depicting politicians or monarchy. The Evidence Act places prima facie responsibilities on website owners over any wrongdoing committed by third party such as offensive comments left on the website.

Since the takeover by Military Junta, Myanmar has been under regular internet shutdown and disruptions. Electronic Transactions Law has been used to criminalize online activity such as the spread of fake news, cyber-attacks and cyber-terrorism; and to provide the government the ability to access data when there is a suspected offence. A draft Cybersecurity Law has been circulated which gives broad powers to the Military Junta to seize ISP user information.

In the Philippines, news media that are critical of the ruling administration face the risk of being linked to communist insurgency. The country's largest broadcaster, ABS-CBN went off-air after its franchise failed to be renewed. Internet service providers were ordered to block news sites Bulatlat and Pinoy Weekly over purported ties to communist-terrorist groups.

Thailand has a restrictive internet freedom that heavily penalises crimes committed against defaming, insulting and threatening the monarchy under the Penal Code. The Computer Crimes Act allows justification for blocking of websites with pornographic contents, matters related to national security, information that could instigate public panic.

Vietnam extends its control over internet content to international tech giants. Facebook and Google have been requested to impose control and removal of accounts and contents, and to hand over potentially vast amounts of data. Bloggers, activists and social media users who are vocal on controversial issues relating to human rights, democracy, the communist party and the state are heavily surveilled by authorities.

Whilst most information on online censorship is largely derived from collections of news reports, this study looks to explore further by using the tools developed by the Open Observatory of Network Interference (OONI) that collects and makes available near real-time, detailed data on Internet interference together with the expertise and support from the researchers and country partners to understand the wider extent of internet censorship in the region and the control of the internet by the governments.

Purpose

The purpose of the Internet Monitoring Action Project (iMAP) State of Internet Censorship Country Report is to understand whether and to what extent internet censorship events occurred through collection and analysis of network measurements in Burma, Cambodia, Hong Kong (China), Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam during the testing period from 1 January 2022 to 30 June 2022.

The iMAP State of Internet Censorship Country Report covers the findings of network measurement collected through Open Observatory of Network Interference (OONI) OONI Probe App that measures the blocking of websites, instant messaging apps, circumvention tools and network tampering. The findings highlight the websites, instant messaging apps and circumvention tools confirmed to be blocked, the ASNs with censorship detected and method of network interference applied. The report also provides background context on the network landscape combined with the latest legal, social and political issues and events which might have an effect on the implementation of internet censorship in the country.

Methodology

Data

Data computed based on the heuristics for this report can be downloaded here: https://github.com/Sinar/imap-data whereas aggregated data can be downloaded from OONI Explorer.

Coverage

The iMAP State of Internet Censorship Country Report covers the findings of network measurement collected through Open Observatory of Network Interference (OONI) OONI Probe App that measures the blocking of websites, instant messaging apps, circumvention tools and network tampering. The findings highlight the websites, instant messaging apps and circumvention tools confirmed to be blocked, the ASNs with censorship detected and method of network interference applied. The report also provides background context on the network landscape combined with the latest legal, social and political issues and events which might have an effect on the implementation of internet censorship in the country.

In terms of timeline, this first iMAP report covers measurements obtained in the six-month period from 1 January 2022 to 30 June 2022. The countries covered in this round are Cambodia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam. India will only be included starting in the next period of reporting.

How are the network measurements gathered?

Network measurements are gathered through the use of OONI Probe app, a free software tool developed by Open Observatory of Network Interference (OONI). To learn more about how the OONI Probe test works, please visit https://ooni.org/nettest/.

iMAP Country Researchers and anonymous volunteers run OONI Probe app to examine the accessibility of websites included in the Citizen Lab test lists. iMAP Country Researchers actively review the country-specific test lists to ensure up-to-date websites are included and context-relevant websites are properly categorised, in consultation with local communities and digital rights network partners. We adopt the approach taken by Netalitica in reviewing country-specific test lists.

It is important to note that the findings are only applicable to the websites that were examined and do not fully reflect all instances of censorship that might have occurred during the testing period.

How are the network measurements analysed?

OONI processes the following types of data through its data pipeline:

Country code

OONI by default collects the code which corresponds to the country from which the user is running OONI Probe tests from, by automatically searching for it based on the user's IP address through their ASN database the MaxMind GeoIP database.

Autonomous System Number (ASN)

OONI by default collects the Autonomous System Number (ASN) of the network used to run OONI Probe app, thereby revealing the network provider of a user.

Date and time of measurements

OONI by default collects the time and date of when tests were run to evaluate when network interferences occur and to allow comparison across time. UTC is used as the standard time zone in the time and date information. In addition, the charts generated on OONI MAT will exclude measurements on the last day by default.

Categories

The 32 website categories are based on the Citizenlab test lists: https://github.com/citizenlab/test-lists. As not all websites tested on OONI are on these test lists, these websites would have unclassified categories.

No.	Category Description	Code	Description
1	Alcohol & Drugs	ALDR	Sites devoted to the use, paraphernalia, and sale of drugs and alcohol irrespective of the local legality.
2	Religion	REL	Sites devoted to discussion of religious issues, both supportive and critical, as well as discussion of minority religious groups.
3	Pornography	PORN	Hard-core and soft-core pornography.
4	Provocative Attire	PROV	Websites which show provocative attire and portray women in a sexual manner, wearing minimal clothing.
5	Political Criticism	POLR	Content that offers critical political viewpoints. Includes critical authors and bloggers, as well as oppositional political organizations. Includes pro-democracy content, anti-corruption content as well as content calling for changes in leadership, governance issues, legal reform. Etc.

No.	Category Description	Code	Description
6	Human Rights Issues	HUMR	Sites dedicated to discussing human rights issues in various forms. Includes women's rights and rights of minority ethnic groups.
7	Environment	ENV	Pollution, international environmental treaties, deforestation, environmental justice, disasters, etc.
8	Terrorism and Militants	MILX	Sites promoting terrorism, violent militant or separatist movements.
9	Hate Speech	HATE	Content that disparages particular groups or persons based on race, sex, sexuality or other characteristics
10	News Media	NEWS	This category includes major news outlets (BBC, CNN, etc.) as well as regional news outlets and independent media.
11	Sex Education	XED	Includes contraception, abstinence, STDs, healthy sexuality, teen pregnancy, rape prevention, abortion, sexual rights, and sexual health services.
12	Public Health	PUBH	HIV, SARS, bird flu, centers for disease control, World Health Organization, etc
13	Gambling	GMB	Online gambling sites. Includes casino games, sports betting, etc.
14	Anonymization and circumvention tools	ANON	Sites that provide tools used for anonymization, circumvention, proxy-services and encryption.
15	Online Dating	DATE	Online dating services which can be used to meet people, post profiles, chat, etc
16	Social Networking	GRP	Social networking tools and platforms.
17	LGBT	LGBT	A range of gay-lesbian-bisexual-transgender queer issues. (Excluding pornography)
18	File-sharing	FILE	Sites and tools used to share files, including cloud-based file storage, torrents and P2P file-sharing tools.
19	Hacking Tools	HACK	Sites dedicated to computer security, including news and tools. Includes malicious and non-malicious content.

No.	Category Description	Code	Description
20	Communication Tools	COMT	Sites and tools for individual and group communications. Includes webmail, VoIP, instant messaging, chat and mobile messaging applications.
21	Media sharing	MMED	Video, audio or photo sharing platforms.
22	Hosting and Blogging Platforms	HOST	Web hosting services, blogging and other online publishing platforms.
23	Search Engines	SRCH	Search engines and portals.
24	Gaming	GAME	Online games and gaming platforms, excluding gambling sites.
25	Culture	CULTR	Content relating to entertainment, history, literature, music, film, books, satire and humour
26	Economics	ECON	General economic development and poverty related topics, agencies and funding opportunities
27	Government	GOVT	Government-run websites, including military sites.
28	E-commerce	COMM	Websites of commercial services and products.
29	Control content	CTRL	Benign or innocuous content used as a control.
30	Intergovernmental Organizations	IGO	Websites of intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations.
31	Miscellaneous content	MISC	Sites that don't fit in any category (XXX Things in here should be categorised)

IP addresses and other information

OONI does not collect or store users' IP addresses deliberately. OONI takes measures to remove them from the collected measurements, to protect its users from potential risks. However, there may be instances where users' IP addresses and other potentially personally-identifiable information are unintentionally collected, if such information is included in the HTTP headers or other metadata of measurements. For example, this can occur if the tested websites include tracking technologies or custom content based on a user's network location.

Network measurements

The types of network measurements that OONI collects depend on the types of tests that are run. Specifications about each OONI test can be viewed through its git repository, and details about what collected network measurements entail can be viewed through OONI Explorer or through OONI's measurement API.

In order to derive meaning from the measurements collected, OONI processes the data types mentioned above to answer the following questions:
- Which types of OONI tests were run?
- In which countries were those tests run?
- In which networks were those tests run?
- When were tests run?
- What types of network interference occurred?
- In which countries did network interference occur?
- In which networks did network interference occur?
- When did network interference occur?
- How did network interference occur?

To answer such questions, OONI's pipeline is designed to answer such questions by processing network measurements data to enable the following:
- Attributing measurements to a specific country.
- Attributing measurements to a specific network within a country.
- Distinguishing measurements based on the specific tests that were run for their collection.
- Distinguishing between "normal" and "anomalous" measurements (the latter indicating that a form of network tampering is likely present).
- Identifying the type of network interference based on a set of heuristics for DNS tampering, TCP/IP blocking, and HTTP blocking.
- Identifying block pages based on a set of heuristics for HTTP blocking.
- Identifying the presence of "middle boxes" within tested networks.

According to OONI, false positives may occur within the processed data due to a number of reasons. DNS resolvers (operated by Google or a local ISP) often provide users with IP addresses that are closest to them geographically. While this may appear to be a case of DNS tampering, it is actually done with the intention of providing users with faster access to websites. Similarly, false positives may emerge when tested websites serve different content depending on the country that the user is connecting from, or in the cases when websites return failures even though they are not tampered with.

Furthermore, measurements indicating HTTP or TCP/IP blocking might actually be due to temporary HTTP or TCP/IP failures, and may not conclusively be a sign of network interference. It is therefore important to test the same sets of websites across time and to cross-correlate data, prior to reaching a conclusion on whether websites are in fact being blocked.

Since block pages differ from country to country and sometimes even from network to network, it is quite challenging to accurately identify them. OONI uses a series of heuristics to try to guess if the page in question differs from the expected control, but these heuristics can often result in false positives. For this reason OONI only says that there is a confirmed instance of blocking when a block page is detected.

Upon collection of more network measurements, OONI continues to develop its data analysis heuristics, based on which it attempts to accurately identify censorship events.

The full list of country-specific test lists containing confirmed blocked websites in Myanmar, Cambodia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam can be viewed here: https://github.com/citizenlab/test-lists.

Confirmed vs Heuristics

Confirmed OONI measurements were based on blockpages with fingerprints recorded here https://github.com/ooni/blocking-fingerprints.

Hence, heuristics as below were run on raw measurements on all countries under iMAP to further confirm blockings.

Firstly, IP addresses with more than 10 domains were identified. Then each of the IP address was checked for the following:

Does the IP in question point to a government blockpage?			
Yes	No, page timed out or shows Content Delivery Network (CDN) page.		
⬇	⬇		
Confirmed blocking	What information can we get about the IP by doing a whois lookup?		
	Local ISP	CDN / Private IP	
	⬇	⬇	
	Confirmed blocking	Do we get a valid TLS certificate for one of the domains in question when doing a TLS handshake and specifying the SNI	
		Yes	No, there were blocking fingerprints found.	No, timed out
		⬇	⬇	⬇
		False positive	**Confirmed blocking**	Sampled measurement is analysed on OONI Explorer.

When blocking is determined, any domain redirected to these IP addresses would be marked as 'dns.confirmed'.

Secondly, HTTP titles and bodies were analysed to determine blockpages. This example shows that the HTTP returns the text 'The URL has been blocked as per the instructions of the DoT in compliance to the orders of Court of Law'. Any domain redirected to these HTTP titles and bodies would be marked as 'http.confirmed'.

As a result, false positives are eliminated and more confirmed blockings were obtained including countries like Cambodia, Vietnam and Philippines which have no confirmed blocking fingerprints on OONI.

In the case of Hong Kong, the results of the heuristics showed external censorship from outside of the country instead of local censorship. Thus, the local researchers had analysed the OONI measurements manually to identify confirmed blockings. The domains identified were based on the timed-out instances.

Key findings in the region

Blocking of websites

- Measurements collected were the highest in Thailand with more than 2.7 million measurements, whereas the lowest was in Cambodia with 238,948 measurements.
- In terms of categories, highest measurements collected were from News and Media and Human Rights Issues websites. In these two categories, the websites were inaccessible (anomaly and confirmed blocked) 4% of the time.
- Pornography sites is the highest category of websites with confirmed blockings, with Indonesia has the highest number of pornography websites blocked among eight countries.
- Similarly, Pornography has the highest rate of anomaly and confirmed blocked measurements on OONI, followed by Provocative Attire and Gambling websites.
- Indonesia has the highest number of websites found to be blocked. This is potentially aided by the open publication of a list of blocked websites by the authorities that mandates ISPs to follow suit.

OONI webconnectivity measurements by country and result type
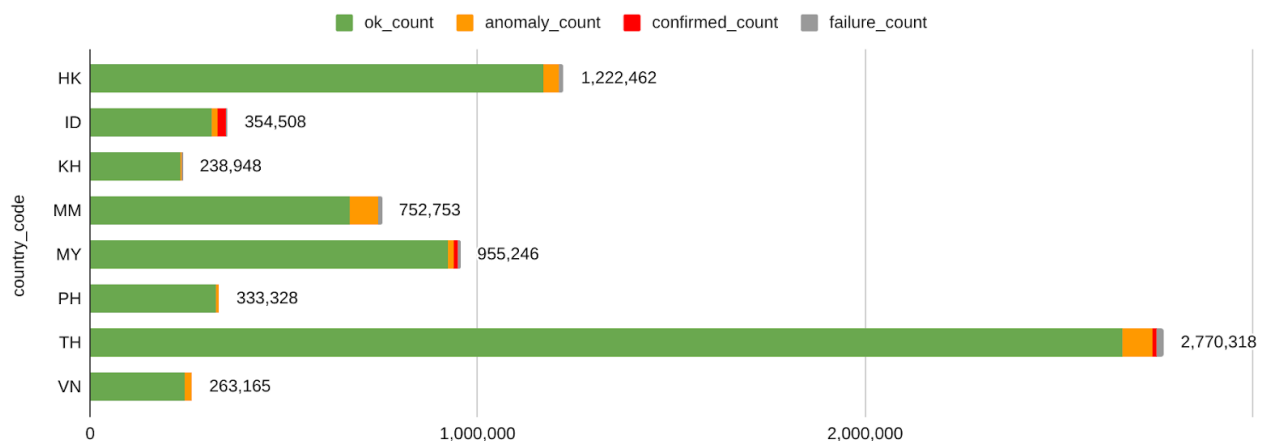
Number of domains confirmed blocked in the 8 countries
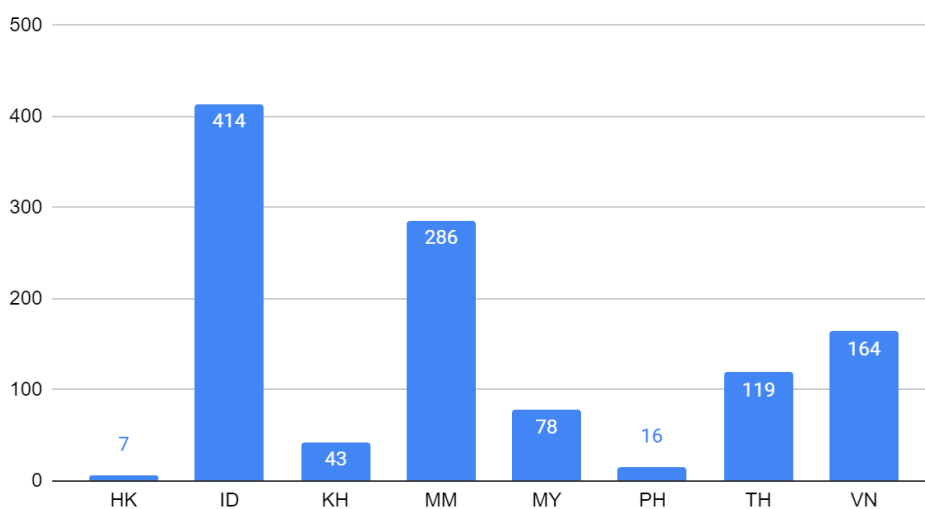
Summary of findings by category

In this section, the analysis will cover the number of domains blocked, domains blocked in more than one country, and anomaly rate by category. More details on the domains blocked or the context of blocking can be found in the specific country reports. Readers should also note the limitations of the websites category as not all domains tested on OONI have been categorised, and some of the websites may be miscategorised. There may also be websites that could belong to more than one category but this was not captured in the data. In the case of Hong Kong, as the domains found blocked manually instead of heuristics, the data cannot be compared directly between Hong Kong and other countries.

Gambling

Gambling websites are the second highest category in terms of number of blockings, as well as anomaly rate recorded on OONI. There are 17 domains blocked in at least 2 iMAP countries and 42 websites blocked in only one country i.e. Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam, showing that there is a significant number of websites specific to the country. However, only Indonesia seems to have recorded a high rate of blockings based on the test lists alone, with 86.2% of the websites found blocked, although this could indicate that there are potentially blockings outside of the test lists in other countries.

Number of Gambling websites blocked by country
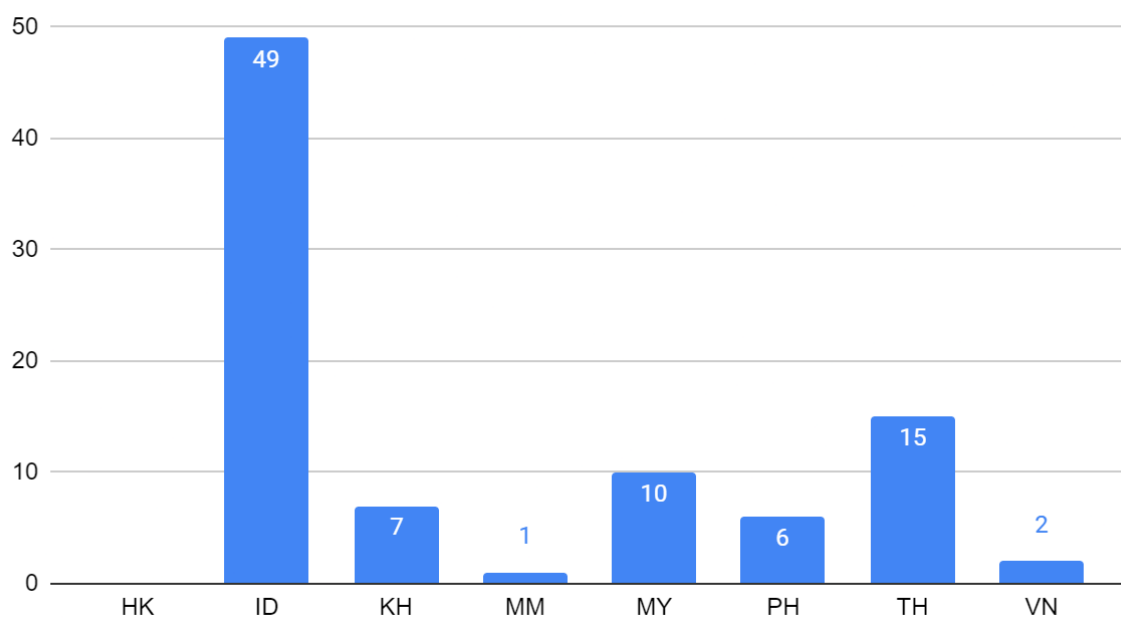
News and Media

News and Media websites seemed to be the highest concern of OONI users, as they recorded the largest measurements in terms of websites category. Myanmar recorded the highest number of domains blocked in this category, with 34 domains or equivalent to 14.5% domains blocked. Similarly, 9.5% of anomalies were recorded when testing websites in this

category, meaning that these websites were inaccessible 9.5% of the time in Myanmar. Vietnam and Indonesia also recorded significant blockings in this category with 21 and 17 domains blocked respectively. Most of the News and Media websites were local, although 1 notable international website that is "bbc.com" was found blocked in Thailand and Vietnam.

## Number of News Media websites blocked by country
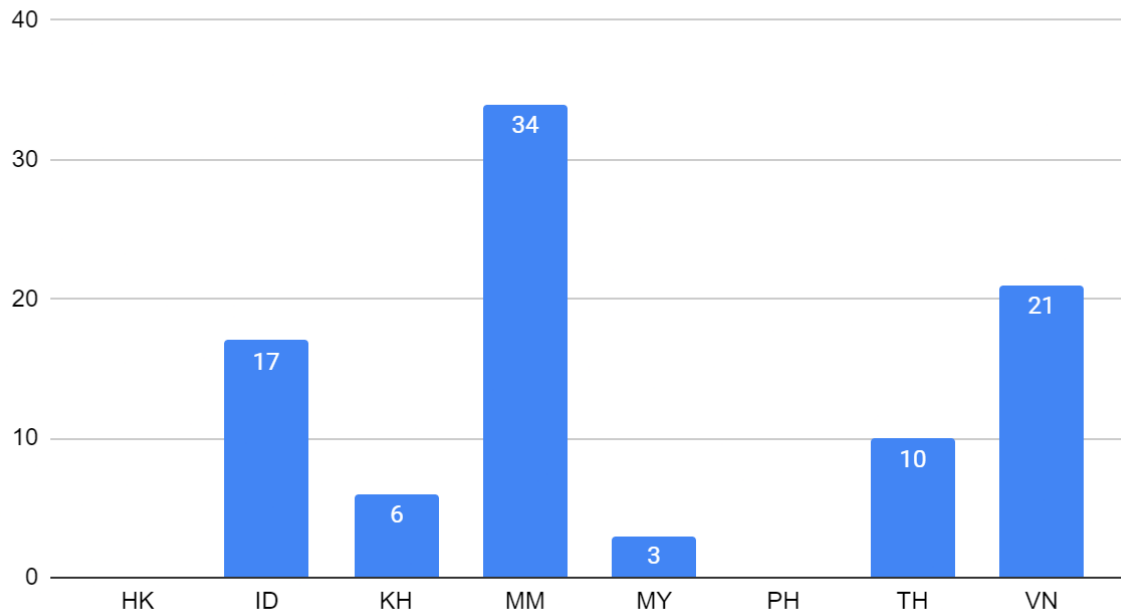
LGBT

Blocking of LGBT websites is prevalent in Indonesia, as well as in Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia and Myanmar. Among the websites blocked in multiple countries are:
- www.samesexmarriage.ca which is blocked in Indonesia, Cambodia and Myanmar;
- www.gaystarnews.com which is blocked in Malaysia and Myanmar;
- www.planetromeo.com, www.gay.com and ilga.org which are blocked in Malaysia and Indonesia;
- www.nifty.org which is blocked in Indonesia and Myanmar;

Compared to the test lists, 25% of LGBT websites in Indonesia are blocked, whereas less than 10% of the websites are blocked in Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia and Indonesia. Similarly, in terms of anomalies, LGBT websites were found inaccessible 20% of the time when tested on OONI.

Number of LGBT websites blocked by country
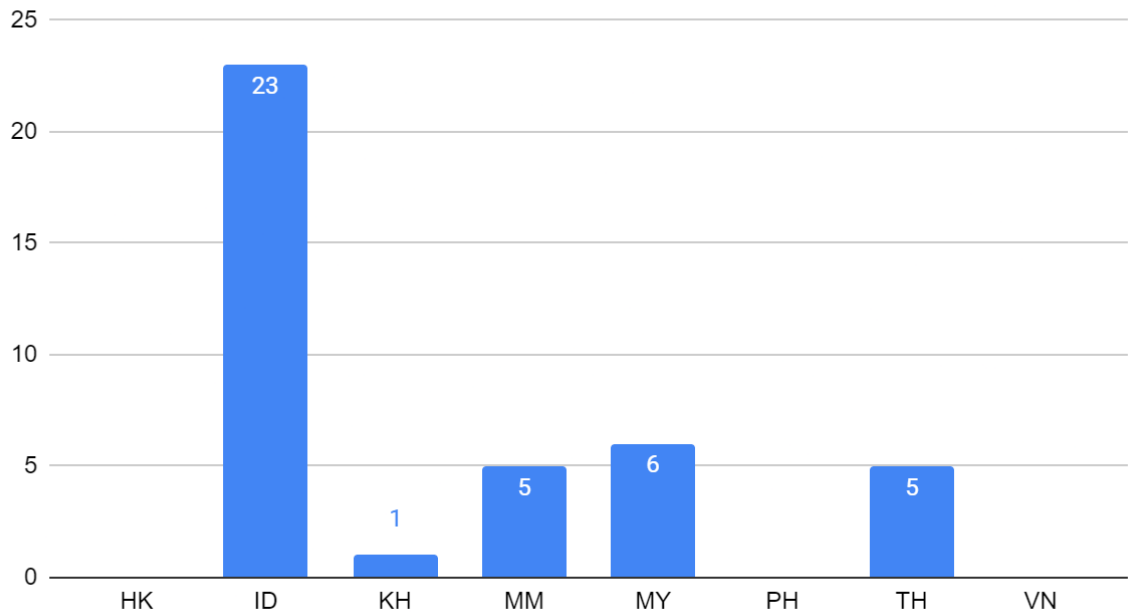
Pornography

In the region, Pornography was the category with the highest number of blockings. Indonesia with the highest number of blockings had also the highest number in this category, followed by Myanmar, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam and Philippines. There are 22 domains blocked in more than one country, and 79 domains found blocked in one country. In terms of anomaly, Pornography websites were found inaccessible in the region at 24.7% of the time.

## Number of Pornography websites blocked by country
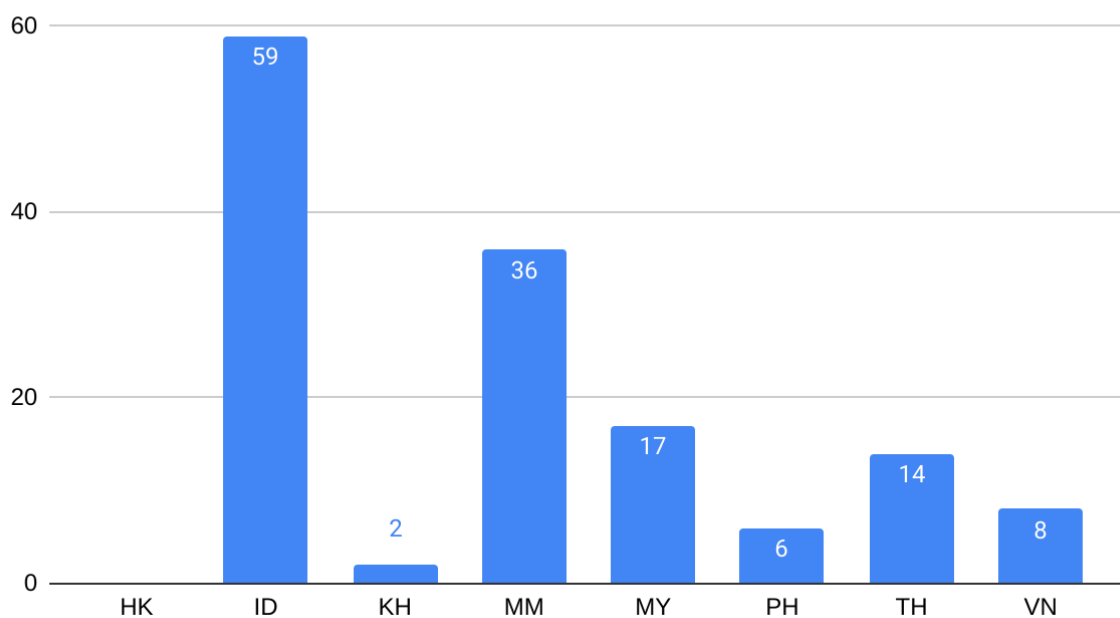
Political Criticism

Regardless of the political system, websites related to political criticism have been found blocked in every country, except the Philippines. The highest number of blockings was found in Vietnam with 47 domains. Similarly, 31.5% of websites in this category were found inaccessible in Vietnam. Regionally, it was recorded that websites in this category were not accessible 8.3% of the time.

Number of Political Criticism websites blocked by country
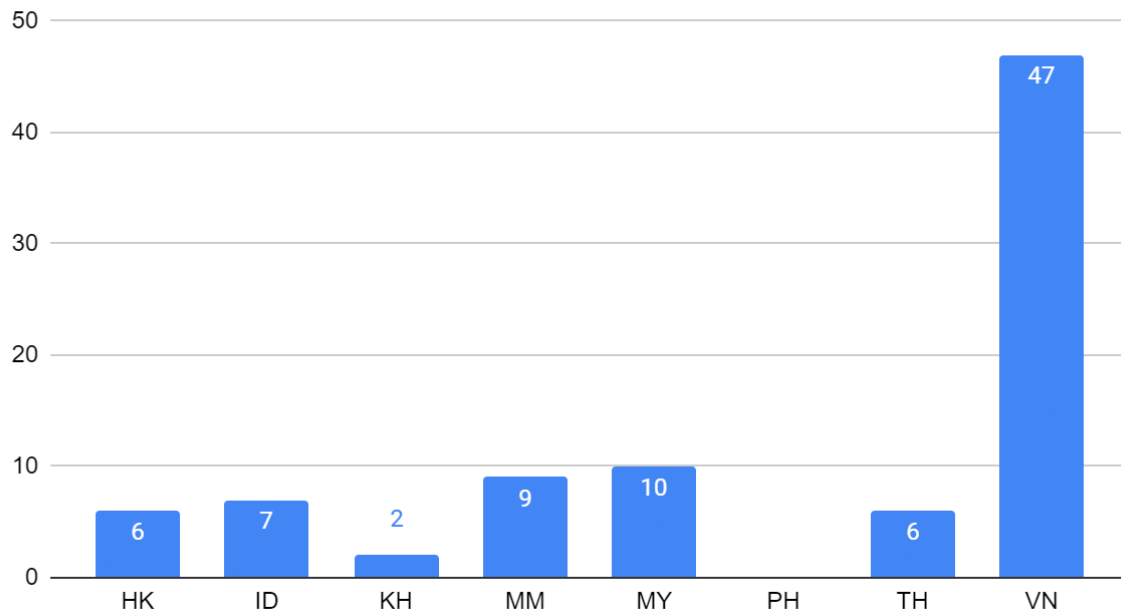
Social Networking

Blocking of Social Networking is most prevalent in Myanmar with 12 domains blocked including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and 4Chan. In other countries, notable websites blocked include 4Chan and Reddit in Indonesia and EBuddy in Cambodia. Other websites are mostly bulletin boards which are run locally. By anomaly rate, websites in this category were found inaccessible in Myanmar 16.1% of the time. In comparison, the number recorded overall for the region was only 2.8%.
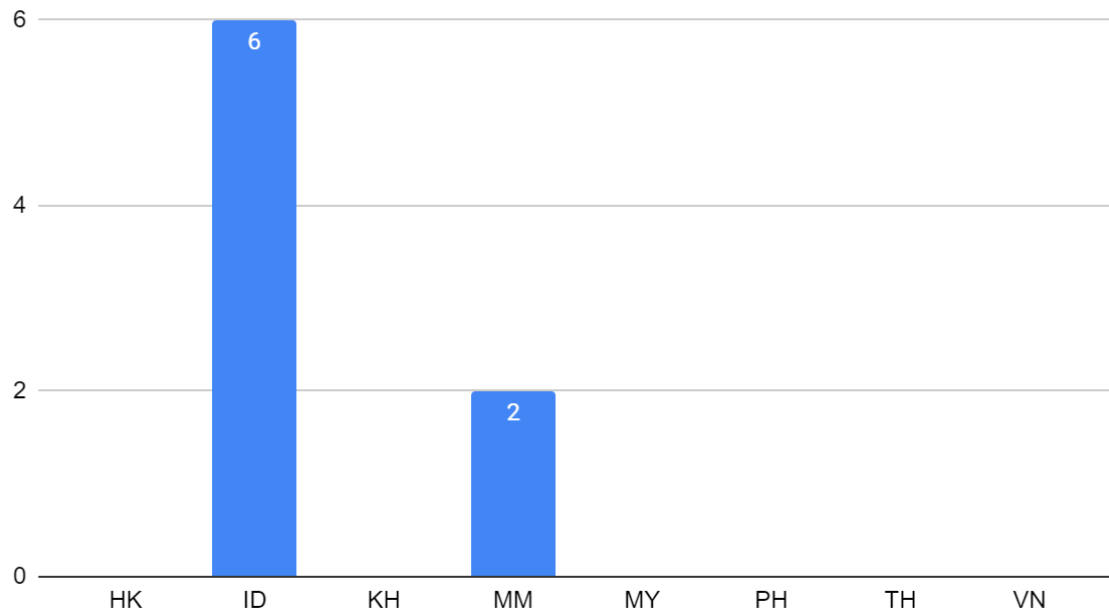
Number of Social Networking websites blocked by country
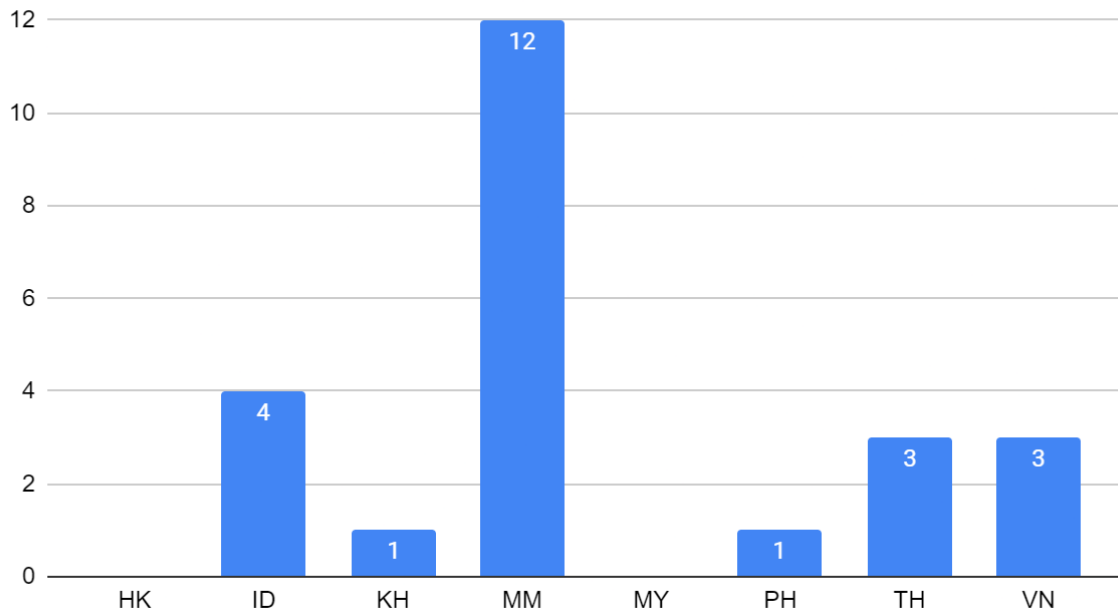
Terrorism and Militants

Terrorism and Militants websites were found blocked only in Indonesia and Myanmar.
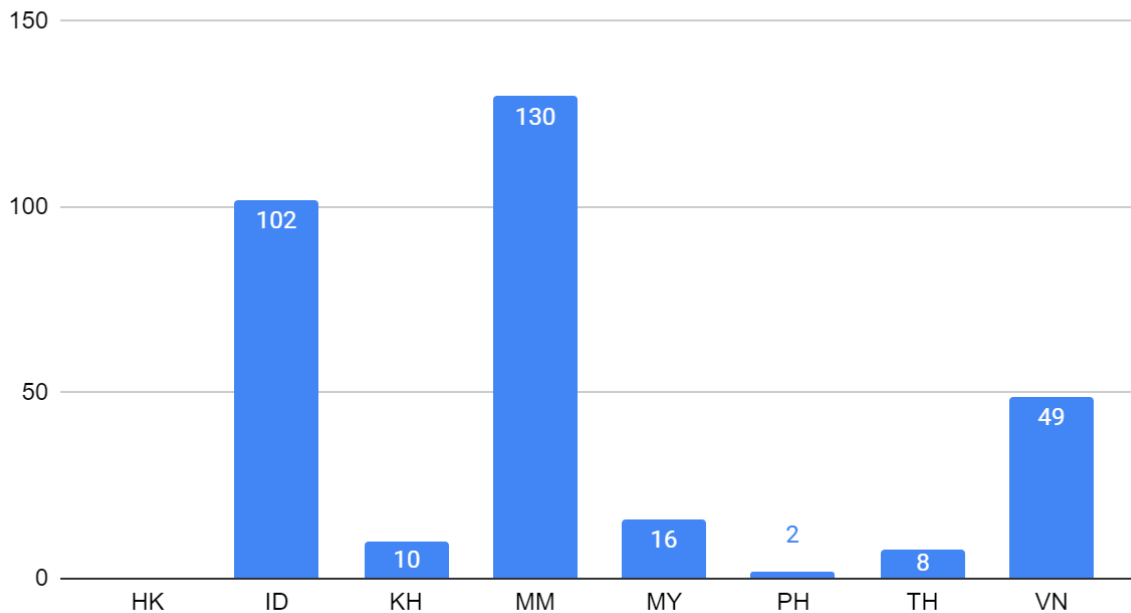
Number of Terrorism and Militants websites blocked by country

Unclassified

Due to the testing done outside of the test lists, there is a high number of blockings recorded without any categories. This would show a high need to review the test list in each of the countries.

Number of Unclassified websites blocked by country

Blocking of Instant Messaging Apps

- There are only four major Instant Messaging Apps being tested on OONI: Facebook Messenger, Signal, Telegram and Whataspp.
- Only Myanmar has recorded high anomalies for Facebook Messenger throughout the reporting period.

Blocking of Circumvention Tools

- There are four types of circumvention tools measured on OONI: Psiphon, Tor, Tor Snowflake and Riseup VPN. However, measurements on RiseupVPN have been removed from this study due to their servers being unreachable and therefore have shown false positives.
- There are signs of blocking of Tor in Vietnam, as well as blocking of Psiphon in the Philippines, although this may need to be investigated further to eliminate possibility of false negatives.
- No signs of blockings have been detected on these 3 circumvention tools in other countries, although there had been blockings on circumvention tools via website testing.

Contribute to the study

There are various ways one may contribute to the OONI measurements:

- Testing: You may test on various platforms, both on Mobile (iOS and Android) and Desktop, including on the CLI on Linux platforms. The domains you test can be either randomly selected from the Citizenlab Test Lists or custom test lists specific to your needs.
- Contribute to the test lists: You can contribute to the test lists on GitHub or on OONI.
- Translate the OONI Probe to your local language here.
- Participate in community discussions on the OONI's Slack channel

iMAP State of Internet Censorship Report 2022

COUNTRY: CAMBODIA

By Lam Socheat (API), Tan Thary (API), Chan Vibol (Consultant), Siti Nurliza Samsudin (Sinar Project) and Kelly Koh (Sinar Project)

Key Findings

- News and other websites are periodically blocked in Cambodia, particularly those that disseminate information that could be perceived as a threat to the ruling government.[1] In July 2018, the government ordered internet service providers (ISPs) to block at least 15 news websites during the country's election.[2] In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government has reportedly blocked access to news sites.[3] In June 2020, the Ministry of Post telecommunications (MPTC) blocked six online gambling sites.[4] In November 2021, TRC blocked 79 illegal online gambling websites.[5] In December 2021, TRC blocked 9 websites and URLs that posted child pornographic images and videos.[6] In February 2022, TRC blocked 15 illegal lottery websites.[7]

- The OONI explorer measurements collected from Jan to June 2022 show that 43 websites (national and Intergovernmental Organizations website) are blocked by DNS, mainly by VIETTEL (CAMBODIA) PTE., LTD. (AS38623) and S.I Group (AS38623). The highest number of blockings were found to be in Gambling and News Media categories.

- However, as data from Cambodia currently do not show any block pages, more measurements may be needed in the next round of reporting to make more substantial conclusions.

- WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, and the Tor network appear to have been accessible across all tested networks throughout the testing period and the result indicated that there is no censorship.

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[1] Freedom House. (2021). *Cambodia.* https://freedomhouse.org/country/cambodia/freedom-net/2021

[2] Narin, S. and Chhengpor, A. (2018) *Government Confirms Blocking 15 Independent News Sites Over Poll "Disruption,"* VOA Cambodia. https://www.voacambodia.com/a/government-confirm-blocking-fifteen-independent-news-sites-over-poll-disruption/4503739.html

[3] Freedom House. (2021). *Cambodia.* https://freedomhouse.org/country/cambodia/freedom-net/2021

[4] Freedom House. (2021). *Cambodia.* https://freedomhouse.org/country/cambodia/freedom-net/2021

[5] Cambodia Blocks 79 Online Gambling Websites. (2021, November 16). FRESH NEWS. http://m.en.freshnewsasia.com/index.php/en/localnews/25644-2021-11-16-07-56-33.html

[6] *Telecom regulator of Cambodia blocks 9 websites and URL that posted child pornographic images and videos* . . (2021, December 5). Khmer Times. https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50982698/telecom-regulator-of-cambodia-blocks-9-websites-and-url-that-posted-child-pornographic-images-and-videos/

[7] Cambodia blocks 15 illegal lottery websites. (2022, February 16). Focus Asia Pacific. https://focusgn.com/asia-pacific/cambodia-blocks-15-illegal-lottery-websites

Introduction

News and other websites are periodically blocked in Cambodia, particularly those that disseminate information that could be perceived as a threat to the ruling government.[8] In July 2018, the government ordered internet service providers (ISPs) to block at least 15 news websites during the country's election.[9] In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government has reportedly blocked access to news sites.[10] In June 2020, the Ministry of Post telecommunications (MPTC) blocked six online gambling sites.[11] In November 2021, TRC blocked 79 illegal online gambling websites.[12] In December 2021, TRC blocked 9 websites and URLs that posted child pornographic images and videos.[13] In February 2022, TRC blocked 15 illegal lottery websites.[14]

In an attempt to examine the current state of internet censorship in Cambodia, the Open Observatory of Network Interference (OONI), Sinar Project, and the Advocacy and Policy Institute collaborated on a joint study to examine whether internet censorship events were persisting in the country through data collection and analysis of network measurements.

The aim of this study was to increase transparency of internet controls and to collect data that can potentially corroborate rumors and reports of internet censorship events. The following sections of this report provide information about Cambodia's network landscape and internet penetration levels, its legal environment with respect to freedom of expression, access to information, and privacy, as well as about cases of censorship and surveillance that have previously been reported in the country. The remainder of the report documents key findings of this study.

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[8] Freedom House. (2021). *Cambodia.* https://freedomhouse.org/country/cambodia/freedom-net/2021

[9] Narin, S. and Chhengpor, A. (2018) *Government Confirms Blocking 15 Independent News Sites Over Poll "Disruption,"* VOA Cambodia. https://www.voacambodia.com/a/government-confirm-blocking-fifteen-independent-news-sites-over-poll-disruption/4503739.html

[10] Freedom House. (2021). *Cambodia.* https://freedomhouse.org/country/cambodia/freedom-net/2021

[11] Freedom House. (2021). *Cambodia.* https://freedomhouse.org/country/cambodia/freedom-net/2021

[12] Cambodia Blocks 79 Online Gambling Websites. (2021, November 16). FRESH NEWS. http://m.en.freshnewsasia.com/index.php/en/localnews/25644-2021-11-16-07-56-33.html

[13] *Telecom regulator of Cambodia blocks 9 websites and URL that posted child pornographic images and videos* . . (2021, December 5). Khmer Times. https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50982698/telecom-regulator-of-cambodia-blocks-9-websites-and-url-that-posted-child-pornographic-images-and-videos/

[14] Cambodia blocks 15 illegal lottery websites. (2022, February 16). Focus Asia Pacific. https://focusgn.com/asia-pacific/cambodia-blocks-15-illegal-lottery-websites

Background

As an old society in Southeast Asia, the Kingdom of Cambodia borders its 181,035 km² (69,898 sq mi) territory with Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, and the Gulf of Thailand, and hosts 16.78 million population, 51% female. A vast majority is original Khmer, accounting for 90% of the total population, followed by 5% of Vietnamese, 4% of ethnic minority groups, and 1% of Chinese. Buddhism is officially recognized as a state religion, in which over 97% of the population practice Theravada Buddhism; other religions include Islam, Christianity, and tribal animism.

After the invasion of Vietnam, the new government installed in early 1979 ruled the country for decades until the first-ever democratic election in 1993. The election was administered by the UN peacemaking council, the so-called UNTAC (United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia), in which 48 political parties joined, including the four fighting factions. A coalition government was formed and headed by two prime ministers from a long-standing party, CPP (Cambodian People Party) and a royalist party, FUNCINPEC (National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful and Cooperative Cambodia).

Civil Society Organizations (CSO) worked intensively to reduce poverty for the rural and affected communities, increase agricultural productivity, increase economic development, promote gender equality and equity, and democratic governance as well as advance democracy and promote human rights. They represent various sectors of work to demand responsive policy and practices from relevant governments and stakeholders. Starting from 2012 onwards, journalists, CSOs and Human Rights Defenders (HRD) embraced the internet as a means to advocate and disseminate their work. The LANGO (Law on Association and NGO) and taxation laws are perceived by several CSOs and experts as tools of the government to restrict NGOs that are critical of the government and the ruling party, in particular NGOs working in democracy, human rights, and advocacy. Some NGOs, like NDI (National Democratic Institute) from the US, were shut down or pushed to do so by the government.

Several media outlets - television stations and most radio outlets - are aligned with the ruling party[15] or the government. A few robust and independent media outlets and NGOs are in trouble with their operations under the conditions set in the LANGO and taxation laws, in particular. The government is criticized for the increased control over the media landscape in the country. Soon after the dissolution of the opposition party, some international media outlets, mainly from the US, were forcefully shut down by the government. Those media could only broadcast their online programs from abroad.

Activism has emerged in the last decade. Human rights defenders, environmental activists, and farmer activists are prominent in the politics of the kingdom working to demand responsiveness and accountability of the government to the society and constituencies, while citizen journalists become powerful in the media sector on the ground. Their personal movement and relations and online communications are increasingly under the surveillance of the government. Journalists, activists, and other internet users increasingly face physical and online harassment for their online posts. Cambodian journalist, Mr. Kouv Piseth is

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[15] Robert Carmichael. (2011, February 17). Opposition sites blocked in Cambodia. Dw.Com. https://www.dw.com/en/opposition-sites-blocked-in-cambodia/a-6441906

arrested on the 24 July 2021 after he posted criticisms on Facebook about the Cambodia government's decision to use China's Sinopharm and Sinovac vaccines, and Mr. Oun Chhiv was arrested on 28th Sept 2021 after his reporting of the on a land dispute which allegedly involved high-ranking officials in the Botum Sakor National Park, Koh Kong province.[16]

Cambodia is claimed by the government as a lower-income country in 2015 and to become a middle-income country by 2030. Such a claim changed the financing landscape. It is implied in the move out of Western NGOs and donor communities, while the influx of Chinese programs and loans for development and business advancement. The internet development of the country dramatically increased in just a few years. Five IPS companies are increasingly investing in this dramatic boom business. All of these companies are from communist and totalist countries, mainly China and Vietnam.

The government claimed that cybercrimes posed great challenges and threats to national safety and security. To protect these, the government put much more effort into developing and putting into practice laws and legal regulations relating to the media and the internet. In contrast, these laws and legal regulations are criticized as tools to increase the surveillance of the works of CSOs, media, and activists that are critical of the government and the ruling party.

Network landscape and internet penetration

Through its strong relations and influence over the ISPs, the government has expanded its control over the internet. As implied, internet freedom in Cambodia is increasingly under threat. Five major telecommunication firms are providing both land-based and mobile internet services in Cambodia—Viettel, Smart Axiata, CamGSM, Xinwei Telecom, and Southeast Asia Telecom, all originating from countries with authoritarian leanings. Their management is closely affiliated with the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) and its officials, and they are likely to provide cover for each other when public scrutiny arises.[17] As restricted by the laws on telecommunications, ISPs must have licenses from MPTC.
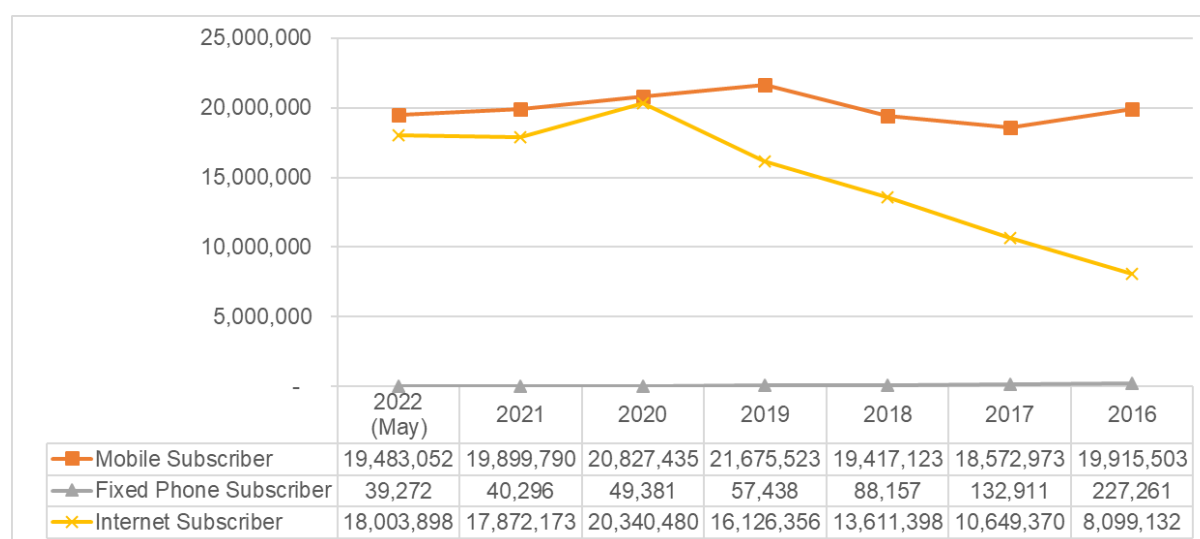
Three prominent communication tools in Cambodia are mobile phone, fixed phone and internet. According to the newly functioning Telecommunication Regulators of Cambodia (TRC), the usage of the fixed phone decreased from 227,261 subscribers in 2016 to 39,272 subscribers in 2022 (May). The usage of mobile phone is moderately stable, just slightly decreased from 19.91 million subscribers in 2016 to 19.48 million in May 2022. However, the internet penetration has increased dramatically in 7 years. It increased from 8.09 millions in 2016 to 18.00 million internet subscribers in May 2022. It is worth noting that one person could subscribe to more than one network.

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[16] United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. (2022). *State of Press Freedom in Cambodia.* https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-08/press-freedom-cambodia-en.pdf

[17] Asia Centre. (2021). Internet Freedoms in Cambodia: A Gateway To Control. https://asiacentre.org/wp-content/uploads/Internet-Freedoms-in-Cambodia-A-Gateway-to-Control.pdf

Mobile Subscribers

	2022 (May)	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
Mobile Subscriber	19,483,052	19,899,790	20,827,435	21,675,523	19,417,123	18,572,973	19,915,503
Fixed Phone Subscriber	39,272	40,296	49,381	57,438	88,157	132,911	227,261
Internet Subscriber	18,003,898	17,872,173	20,340,480	16,126,356	13,611,398	10,649,370	8,099,132

Source: Telecommunication Regulators of Cambodia

Instant Messaging

Based on the available data, the fixed internet service increased slightly from 283,508 in 2021 to 312,233 in 2022 (May).

Social media is widely used in Cambodia. Data presented in the table below shows that in early 2022, Facebook had 11.60 million users, Facebook Messenger reached 7.85 million users in Cambodia[18]. They are followed by Instagram which had 2.05 million users, equating to 12.0 percent of the total population and TikTok reached 6.68 million users. Despite being the least used platform, LinkedIn is also used in the country.[19]

Year (mil.)	Facebook Messenger	Facebook User	Instagram	TikTok	LinkedIn
2022	7.85	11.60	2.05	6.68	0.46

Source: DATAREPORTAL

Mobile Company

According to TRC, three (Metfone, Cellcard, and Smart) of the five telecommunications companies account for 90% of users. Metfone has the widest coverage on mobile data and internet usage, but Cellcard has won the Ookla Speed Test Award for 4 years from 2017 to 2020. Smart got its reputation by promoting tech startups for the youth and teenager audience. Cellcard and Smart, in particular, such as offering many promotions, e-sport and e-games that have gained the interest of young audiences.

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[18] It is important to note that social media users may not represent unique individuals.
[19] Kemp, S. (2022, February 15). *Digital 2022: Cambodia.* DataReportal – Global Digital Insights. https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2022-cambodia

No.	Network	Company	
1	Smart	Smart Axiata Co., Ltd	
2	Mobitel/ CellCard	CamGSM Co., Ltd.	
3	CooTel	Xinwei (Cambodia) Telecom Co., Ltd	
4	SEATEL	Southeast Asia Telecom (Cambodia) Co., Ltd.	
5	Metfone	Viettel (Cambodia) Pte., Ltd.	

Source: Telecommunication Regulators of Cambodia

Internet Service Providers

With a license from MPTC, around 30 ISPs have operated in Cambodia. Among those, there are five major telecommunication firms, providing both land-based and mobile internet services —Viettel, Smart Axiata, CamGSM, Xinwei Telecom and Southeast Asia Telecom, all originating from countries with authoritarian leanings. Viettel, a Vietnamese company run by Vietnam's Ministry of Defence, operates in Cambodia under the name Metfone.

CamGSM was originally known as Mobitel before rebranding itself to Cellcard in 2005. Viettel, Smart Axiata and local CamGSM account for around 90% of the market share of mobile subscriptions. Smart Axiata enjoyed a market share of almost 60% while Viettel and CamGSM enjoyed 26% and 11% of the market share respectively. Xinwei Telecom from China, which operates under the name CooTel, and Southeast Asia Telecom from Singapore account for 2.67% and 0.65% of the market share, respectively.[20] In particular, Metfone is providing all types of services (Internet access, leased lines, private leased circuits, mobile phone voice and messaging services, ADSL), while each of the other ISPs also provides some of these services.

No.	ISP Name	ASNs
1	Cogetel Online	23673 24325
2	AngkorNet	24478
3	EZECOM	38901
4	MetFone	38623

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[20] Asia Centre. (2021). Internet Freedoms in Cambodia: A Gateway To Control. https://asiacentre.org/wp-content/uploads/Internet-Freedoms-in-Cambodia-A-Gateway-to-Control.pdf

No.	ISP Name	ASNs
5	Clicknet	38893
6	TeleSURF / Mobitel	17976
7	WiCam	24492
8	CamNet	17726
9	Chuan Wei	45348
10	City Link	18014 24441
11	Camintel	38209
12	MekongNet	131186 131203
13	Smart Mobile	45498
14	MekongNet IXP	38235
15	WirelessIP	24567
16	BeyondTel	45339
17	CIDC IT	7712
18	Cambo Technology	17981
19	DTV Star	45429
20	Hello	38600 45281
21	NeocomISP	9902 23868
22	PPCTV	38286
23	Finder IXP	45124
24	Star-Cell	38723
25	Flash Tech	45465

No.	ISP Name	ASNs
26	Opennet	131178
27	S.I Net	131207
28	CB	38579

Legal environment

With the justification to promote national safety and security protection, the Cambodian government has drafted, enacted and or put into force several laws and legal regulations. However, these have been criticized as tools of the government to increase the control over the internet usage which they are affecting the basic rights to freedom of expression.

Freedom of expression

Constitution

Article 41 of the Constitution guarantees freedom of expression. However, Article 41 stipulates that, in exercising freedom of expression, "no one shall exercise these rights to infringe upon the honor of others, or to affect the good customs of society, public order and national security". As evidenced in later national legislation and non-legal measures, the state has actively promulgated measures to roll back guarantees of internet freedom based on such concerns regarding honor, public order and national security. Article 41 also provides for regulation of the media: the "regime of the media shall be determined by law".

The latest amendment to the Constitution in 2018 further diminished compliance with international standards. An amendment to Article 49 —concerning respect for the constitution and laws and defending the nation—was the most damaging to fundamental freedoms. The amendment now obligates "Every Khmer citizen to uphold national interest" and to refrain from "conducting any activities which either directly or indirectly affect the interests of the Kingdom of Cambodia and of Khmer citizens." When justifying the necessity of the amendment, Minister of Interior Sar Kheng singled out activists, HRDs and opposition members for their appeals to the international community to impose sanctions on Cambodia over its crackdown on opposition and civil society (Nachemson & Dara, 2018). In such context, it is evident that Article 49 as amended can be easily used to curtail freedom of expression online, especially when the statement criticizes the state or emphasizes a call to action against the State. Any dissent against the government can prompt disproportionate legal actions penalizing the exercise of freedom of expression.[21]

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[21] Nachemson, A., Dara, M., Nachemson, A., & Dara, M. (2018, January 30). *Government looks to make controversial amendments to Constitution.* Phnom Penh Post. https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national-politics/government-looks-make-controversial-amendments-constitution

Penal Code

The 2009 Penal Code contains vaguely-worded provisions on "plotting", sharing "false information" and "incitement to commit a felony," which have been used to charge internet users for posting and sharing critical content on social media. Criminal defamation is provided for under Article 305 of the 2009 Penal Code. Furthermore, spreading disinformation and conspiracy are criminalized under Article 425 and 453; while laws related to the incitement and provocation to commit crimes are stipulated under Articles 494 and 495. The latest amendment in 2018 introduced Article 437 bis, or the lèse-majesté provision, to the Code.

Article 305 on public defamation stipulates that "any allegation or slanderous charge that undermines the honor or the reputation of a person or an institution" is a criminal offense. The crime can be committed through several means. These categories of assessment apply to all provisions mentioned in this section and cover the common activities of most users online, such as the writing and sharing of posts on online platforms or social media. If these online actions are deemed defamatory, the act is punishable by fines between US$ 24.60 to US$ 2,460. Article 305, in tandem with other provisions in the Penal Code, have been disproportionately used to silence criticisms by opposition politicians and critics.

Article 425 (false information) criminalizes the "communication or disclosure of any false information with a view to inducing a belief that a destruction, defacement or damage dangerous to other persons will be carried out". This has been utilized by local authorities as criminalizing the dissemination of information they perceive as fake news, including critical comments directed at the government that they believe may potentially cause political instability or damage to their reputation. The use of this Article to penalize an individual can result in imprisonment from one to two years, or a fine ranging from $490USD to $981USD.
Similarly, Article 453 on conspiracy and plotting against the government criminalizes "any scheme set up between several persons to commit a criminal attempt, and this scheme was materialized by one or several concrete actions, constitutes a conspiracy". Individuals charged can face a minimum of five and up to ten years of imprisonment. The article has been misused to criminalize dissent against the state, even in instances where there is no evidence of plotting.

The provisions most frequently used to persecute members of the opposition, government critics, activists and media professionals are Articles 494 and 495 (incitement to commit a felony). Under Article 495, incitement to "commit a felony or to disturb social security" by means identified in Article 494, the same as those under Article 305, is "punishable by imprisonment from six months to two years and a fine from one million to four million Riels, where the incitement was ineffective".

Article 437 bis (lèse-majesté) prohibits criticism of the King and outlines penalties of between one to five years imprisonment and monetary fines ranging from US$500 to US$2,460. Following Thailand's lead in prosecuting political critics for lèse-majesté, this provision encroaches on social media users' online freedoms (Boyle and Chhengpor, 2018). Internet

users can be charged with this crime through any "word, gesture, writing, picture or other media which affects the dignity of the individual".[22]

Law on the Management of the Nation in a State of Emergency

In April 2020, the Cambodian government passed the Law on the Management of the Nation in a State of Emergency, to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. This law was heavily criticized by civil society for providing the government with extensive powers to restrict free expression during a state of emergency.[23] It empowered the government to monitor information online, ban or restrict news and media sharing, and implement other measures it deems necessary.[24] Prime Minister Hun Sen prepared a royal decree for the King to use if he decided to declare a state of emergency following a COVID-19 outbreak in November 2020; however, the government did not officially declare a state of emergency during the coverage period.[25]

2019 draft Law on Access to Information

Containing protections for whistleblowers and having the potential to positively impact free expression online if approved and enforced, the updated draft released to the public in August 2019 raised concerns about the law's adherence to international human rights standards, as well as its use of broad and unclear standards that could threaten access of information and freedom of expression. For example, the law narrowly defines the type of information and institutions it applies to; lacks effective oversight procedures; permits public authorities to deny disclosure in various overly broad situations; and contains a criminal libel and defamation provision. In August 2020, the law was finalized and was set to be approved by the Council of Ministers[26]; however, due to delays because of the pandemic, the law had not yet been sent to parliament until the end of 2021.[27]

Law on Telecommunications

The 2015 Law on Telecommunication imposes generic obligations on telecommunications service providers, which authorities claim will enhance service access in the countryside and rural areas. Within the broad range of regulations, however, the law also functions as a legal tool to monitor internet activity. Freedom of expression is threatened through the imposition of monitoring actors (Article 70 and 71), decreased data protection (Article 97 and 6) and the criminalisation of free speech on radio, television, online and in private messages (Article 80).

Article 6 requires "all telecommunications operators and persons involved with the telecommunications sector" to provide MPTC with "the telecommunications, information and

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[22] Asia Centre. (2021). *Internet Freedoms in Cambodia: A Gateway To Control.* https://asiacentre.org/wp-content/uploads/Internet-Freedoms-in-Cambodia-A-Gateway-to-Control.pdf
[23] Civil Society Organizations call for the Royal Government of Cambodia to Amend the State of Emergency Law to Protect Human Rights cited in Freedom House. (2021). *Cambodia.* https://freedomhouse.org/country/cambodia/freedom-net/2021.
[24] Opportunism, COVID-19, and Cambodia's State of Emergency Law cited in Freedom House. (2021). *Cambodia.* https://freedomhouse.org/country/cambodia/freedom-net/2021.
[25] Freedom House. (2021). *Cambodia.* https://freedomhouse.org/country/cambodia/freedom-net/2021.
[26] Freedom House. (2021). *Cambodia.* https://freedomhouse.org/country/cambodia/freedom-net/2021.
[27] IFJ. (2022, July 1). *Cambodia: Government needs to pass Access to Information Law.* https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/category/press-releases/article/cambodia-government-needs-to-pass-access-to-information-law.html

communication technology service data". The lack of definition of who this legitimate authority is highly problematic and could potentially lead to arbitrary surveillance. Hence the law—by allowing surveillance of electronic devices—enables Cambodian authorities to actively phone-tap and monitor online discourses in order to selectively persecute targeted individuals.

Article 80 states that the "establishment, installation and utilization of equipment in [the] telecommunication sector, if these acts lead to national insecurity, shall be punished by sentences from 7 to 15 years imprisonment." The lack of clarity over types of telecommunication activity could heavily punish legitimate expression via radio shows, television, online and even through private messages and phone conversations between individuals, should the authorities determine it to be a threat.[28]

Cybercrime Law (Draft)[29]

Proposed in 2012, The law is subject to further changes in response to critical backlash, and as of August 2021, there was no specific date for the completion of the drafting nor for the implementation of the Law. Articles 8 and 12 state that service providers must "preserve traffic data for at least 180 days", to be shared with "competent authorities" upon their request.

Articles 32 and 33 criminalize the "unauthorized access" to a computer system or the transferring of data from one system to another without permission. Those charged face up to 10 years imprisonment. These Articles also pose concerns to whistleblowers and HRDs who access such information to expose rights violations by the state, as they are not provided adequate safeguards.

Article 40 criminalizes the use of computers to initiate "interruptions, fear, threats, abuses, [and] intimidation". Individuals charged under this Article face a maximum of six months imprisonment. Article 45 criminalizes "any person who knowingly and intentionally makes a false statement or material misrepresentation through information technology" that could be detrimental to "public safety" and "national security".

Freedom from interference

Press freedom and internet freedom in Cambodia are increasingly under threat. In 2022 'Freedom in the World' report by Freedom House, Cambodia was classified as "Not Free". People are afraid to express their view or opinion online, especially those who are critical of the government. The Cambodian government has used the existing laws and legal regulations and developed new ones to increase interference. It was noted that the Criminal Code has been used in cases involving journalists and the COVID-19 Law has been used in cases involving journalists and human rights defenders.

In 2020, the government enacted legislation to declare a state of emergency that would grant authorities vast powers to conduct digital surveillance, ban assemblies, and ban or limit

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[28] Asia Centre. (2021). Internet Freedoms in Cambodia: A Gateway To Control. https://asiacentre.org/wp-content/uploads/Internet-Freedoms-in-Cambodia-A-Gateway-to-Control.pdf
[29] Asia Centre. (2021). Internet Freedoms in Cambodia: A Gateway To Control. https://asiacentre.org/wp-content/uploads/Internet-Freedoms-in-Cambodia-A-Gateway-to-Control.pdf

broadcasting, among other provisions that amounted to virtually unchecked powers. As noted by the Freedom House, while a state of emergency was never declared, the government issued numerous threats as the global pandemic became apparent, and a number of people, including private citizens and those considered political opponents, were indeed arrested throughout year on the pretext of spreading false information about COVID-19 or purportedly contravening government narratives about public health. In 2021, dozens of people were arrested for criticizing the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to a recent study of the OHCHR that surveyed 35 journalists revealed that journalists have been interfered with. All the respondents reported that they had faced some forms of interference while carrying out their jobs. The most common form of interference was surveillance or arbitrary detention. The record of OHCHR showed that as of May 2022, 4,323 individual instances of arbitrary detention in the context of the strike at NagaWorld Casino. Another record of OHCHR reported since January 2017, 23 journalists have faced criminal charges as a result of their work. In the recent report of OHCHR it is concluded that journalists in Cambodia are increasingly being subjected to various forms of harassment and pressure, as well as violence amid growing restrictions on civic space and press freedoms in the country.

Freedom from censorship

Censorship has dramatically increased in Cambodia in recent years through different forms. The forceful impose on legal and non-legal measures by the Cambodian government against targeted groups or individuals have negatively restricted the exercise of freedom of expression and internet freedoms.

OHCHR argued that while neither Prakas 170 nor the Sub-Decree on the National Internet Gateway are specifically targeted at the media, the potential impact of these instruments on freedom of expression more broadly and press freedom, in particular, is profound. Both instruments vest broad powers in government to censor expression in a manner that appears to go well beyond what is permitted by Article 19(3) of ICCPR, giving rise to situations where government agencies will be empowered to censor expression and reporting that they deem inconvenient. Reflecting the order from the Ministry of Information to ISPs to block the services of 15 independent media outlets or news websites during the previous national election in 2018, it is argued that Prakas 170 and the Sub-Decree on the National Internet Gateway threaten to provide a more formal legislative basis for the closure of websites, including those of news outlets, giving rise to fears of the routing, shutting down of critical voices and reporting.

People are afraid to speak up against the ruling regime. According to a recent study of the Asiacenter, it is suggested that individuals have taken a step back from sharing their own political opinions online or participating in political events, and instead prefer to simply read or listen to such content as they are afraid to get into trouble with the Cambodian authorities, who have ramped up their control of the online sphere.

In 2020, according to CCHR's Cambodia Fundamental Freedoms Monitor report, 108 cases of restriction on freedom of expression by the RGC were reported; out of which 57 cases

(53%) occurred online[30]. The report suggested that the trend has been consistent in the past three years where 83% (2019), 73% (2018), 69% (2017) of respondents were cautious for their own safety when sending or sharing information over social media. Recently, in 2022, a report from OHCHR that interviewed 15 men and six women journalists showed that 60% of them had faced verbal threats in connection with their work. Another study noted that Facebook was the most surveilled online platform, with 46 cases of restrictions on freedom of expression reported, followed by Tiktok (8) and YouTube (7).[31][32]

Free access to information

In line with the international human rights standards and principles concerning access to information, several laws and legal regulations of Cambodia have guaranteed access to information (A2I). Three provisions in the current Cambodian Constitution provide the constitutional underpinnings of a protected right of "timely and effective access to high quality and accurate information held by the Cambodian government and other public institutions". Article 5 of the Press Law recognizes the "right of access to information in government-held records. Article 13 of the 2005 Archive Law states: Public archives, which are published documents, are permitted to be used by the public for research and consultations as unrestricted information. Other public activities shall be permitted for free research 20 years thereafter the date of the documents or thereafter the end of the proceeding, or in special cases as stipulated in Article 14 of this Law.[33] The Information Law remains in the draft version till late 2021 since its initiative version was drafted in 2007.

However, free access to information remains a great challenge. A recent study of OHCHR with journalists suggested that journalists are working in an increasingly difficult environment, one that is particularly fraught with difficulties when it comes to accessing information from public sources. While the authorities have adopted laws that seem to curtail the right to freedom of expression, they have delayed finalizing a promised new law that will permit journalists and media personnel to access official information.

Privacy

Inter-Ministerial Prakas (Proclamation) No. 170[34]
This Prakas was implemented amidst an environment of stricter controls on online platforms during the elections, such as blocking of pro-democracy websites. The Prakas' initial proclamation enables the close collaboration between the Ministry of Information, Ministry of Interior and MPTC to monitor social media usage. The regulation directly targets website publications and social media networks within the Cambodian Internet space. Under Clause 6, the Ministry of Information is authorized to manage published online information through electronic systems and "take action" against illegal publications.

[30]Asia Centre. (2021). Internet Freedoms in Cambodia: A Gateway To Control. https://asiacentre.org/wp-content/uploads/Internet-Freedoms-in-Cambodia-A-Gateway-to-Control.pdf
[31] Asia Centre. (2021). Internet Freedoms in Cambodia: A Gateway To Control. https://asiacentre.org/wp-content/uploads/Internet-Freedoms-in-Cambodia-A-Gateway-to-Control.pdf
[32]
[33] Leos, R. (n.d.) *Access to Information in Southeast Asia and Cambodia.* https://apiinstitute.org/uploads/Handbooks_Info%20Materials/Access%20to%20Information/Access%20to%20Information%20in%20Southeast%20Asia%20and%20Cambodia%20-%202010.pdf
[34] Asia Centre. (2021). Internet Freedoms in Cambodia: A Gateway To Control. https://asiacentre.org/wp-content/uploads/Internet-Freedoms-in-Cambodia-A-Gateway-to-Control.pdf

While the Inter-Ministerial Prakas was often called Cambodia's 'fake news' law, it has rarely been used to criminalize the act of disseminating disinformation. Rather, it has been used as a justification for governmental digital surveillance.

National Internet Gateway[35]

The Sub-Decree significantly enhances monitoring capacities over user activity, as gateway operators will report their observations on internet usage to the Ministry of Telecommunications. Similar to the Inter-Ministerial Prakas, this law is geared towards online state surveillance rather than criminalizing online activities. Therefore, this new policy is a highly potent tool against online expression and the right to privacy.

Article 6 of the document describes the functions and duties of the NIG operator. These include the management of access to connection and internet services. This Article, due to vague and overly-broad provisions, allows for the government to block access to sites that propagate critical views against the state, by branding it as information that threatens social order or safety.

Article 12 (revenue collection, safety, and public order protection) also requires NIG operators to "[assure] safety, public order, dignity, culture, tradition and custom of the society, as well as preventing and cracking down on crimes". Vague definitions and unclear assessments of what constitutes a crime, or what actions threaten "social order, dignity, culture, traditions, and customs" potentially allows for continued politically motivated prosecution of online activists and internet users. Service providers must also urge users to complete online forms and verify their identities - the collection of such data, with no existing safeguards on data privacy, may result in its use to surveil and monitor internet activity. As such monitoring is already commonplace in Cambodia, the NIG only serves to worsen the situation of internet freedoms and self-censorship.

Under Article 14, gateway operators are required to store data and provide routine status reports to the authorities. The storage of technical records, IP addresses, and identification of the route of traffic through the NIG for 12 months, allows operators to monitor user activities.

Reported cases of internet censorship and surveillance

Several cases of internet censorship and surveillance have been reported in Cambodia over the last decade.On the 27 and 28 2018 election day, 15 websites of the independent news like voice of America's Khmer, Radio Free Asia's Khmer, Voice of Democracy, Vayo FM Radio, Phnom Penh Post, Monorom.info and the news site of the Independent Network for Social Justice. were blocked by ISPs through the order from the government authorities.

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[35] Asia Centre. (2021). Internet Freedoms in Cambodia: A Gateway To Control. https://asiacentre.org/wp-content/uploads/Internet-Freedoms-in-Cambodia-A-Gateway-to-Control.pdf

Examining internet censorship in Cambodia

The Open Observatory of Network Interference (OONI), in collaboration with Sinar Project and the Advocacy and Policy Institute, performed a study of internet censorship in Cambodia. The aim of this study was to understand whether and to what extent censorship events occurred in Cambodia during the testing period from Jan to June 2022.

The sections below document the methodology and key findings of this study.

Methodology

In an attempt to identify potential internet censorship events in Cambodia, the study has applied the following methodologies:
- Review of the Citizen Lab's Cambodia test list;
- Run OONI network measurements; and
- Undertake data analysis.

A list of URLs that are relevant and commonly accessed in Cambodia was created by the Citizen Lab for the purpose of enabling network measurement researchers to examine their accessibility in Cambodia. As part of this study, this list of URLs was reviewed to include additional URLs - along with other URLs that are commonly accessed around the world - and tested for blocking based on OONI's free software tests. A total of 191 URLs from Cambodia were added. Such tests were run from local vantage points in Cambodia, and they also examined whether systems that are responsible for censorship, surveillance, and traffic manipulation were present in the tested network. Once network measurement data was collected from these tests, the data was subsequently processed and analyzed based on a set of heuristics for detecting internet censorship and traffic manipulation.

The testing period for this study started from January 2022 to June 2022.

Findings

Testing of websites

The test lists containing the websites to be tested for monitoring internet censorship using the OONI probe are grouped into 32 different categories.

Until the end of June, 1,730 websites (Cambodia-based and international websites) from different categories. These consist of websites from the Citizen Lab test lists and custom lists run by users using the OONI probe tool. The chart below presents the number of domains by website category.

## 1730 Websites was tested
Jan- June 2022
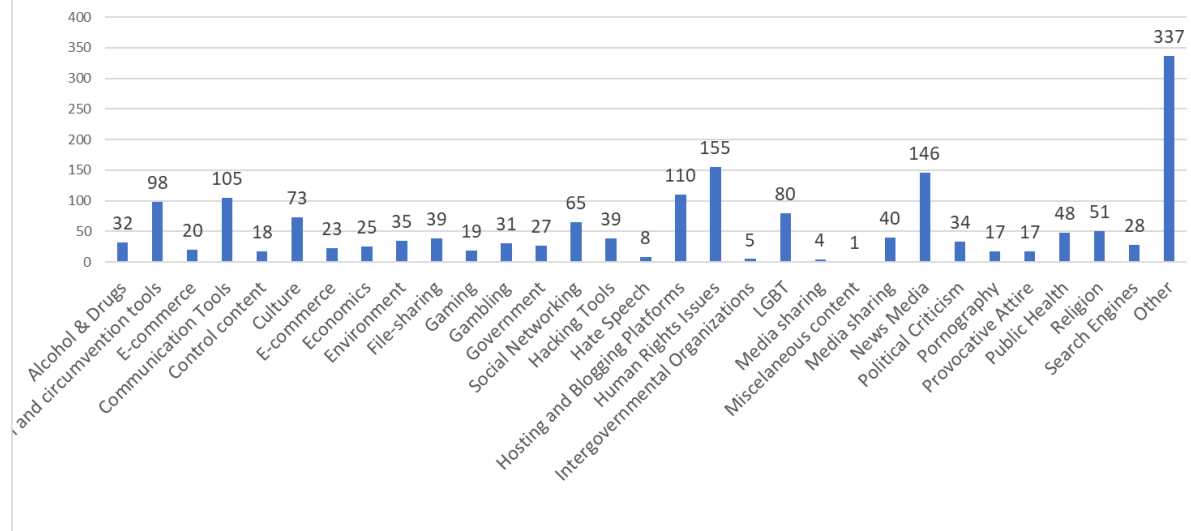
As presented in the table below, the OONI Probe ran 289,357 measurements during the reporting period. Out of these, 96.42% or 278,985 were successfully run with a positive result, indicating no blockage or hijack, and 0.71% or 2067 unsuccessful runs were counted. The remainder of 2.87% or 8305 measurements were recorded as anomalies count. The chart below shows measurement results from January to June 2022.
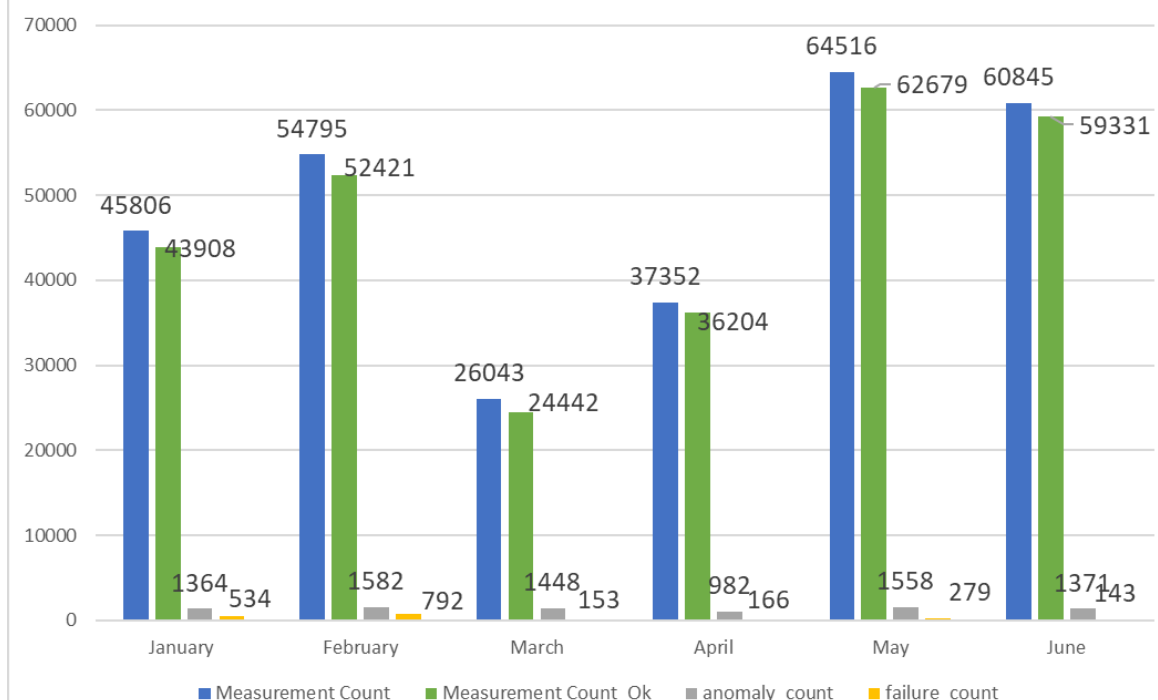
Measurement Count from the OONI Running				
Month	Total measurements	OK	Anomaly	Failure
January	45806	43908	1364	534
February	54795	52421	1582	792
March	26043	24442	1448	153
April	37352	36204	982	166
May	64516	62679	1558	279
June	60845	59331	1371	143
Total	**289357**	**278985**	**8305**	**2067**
Percentage share (%)	**100%**	**96.42%**	**2.87%**	**0.71%**

Measurement counts by website category
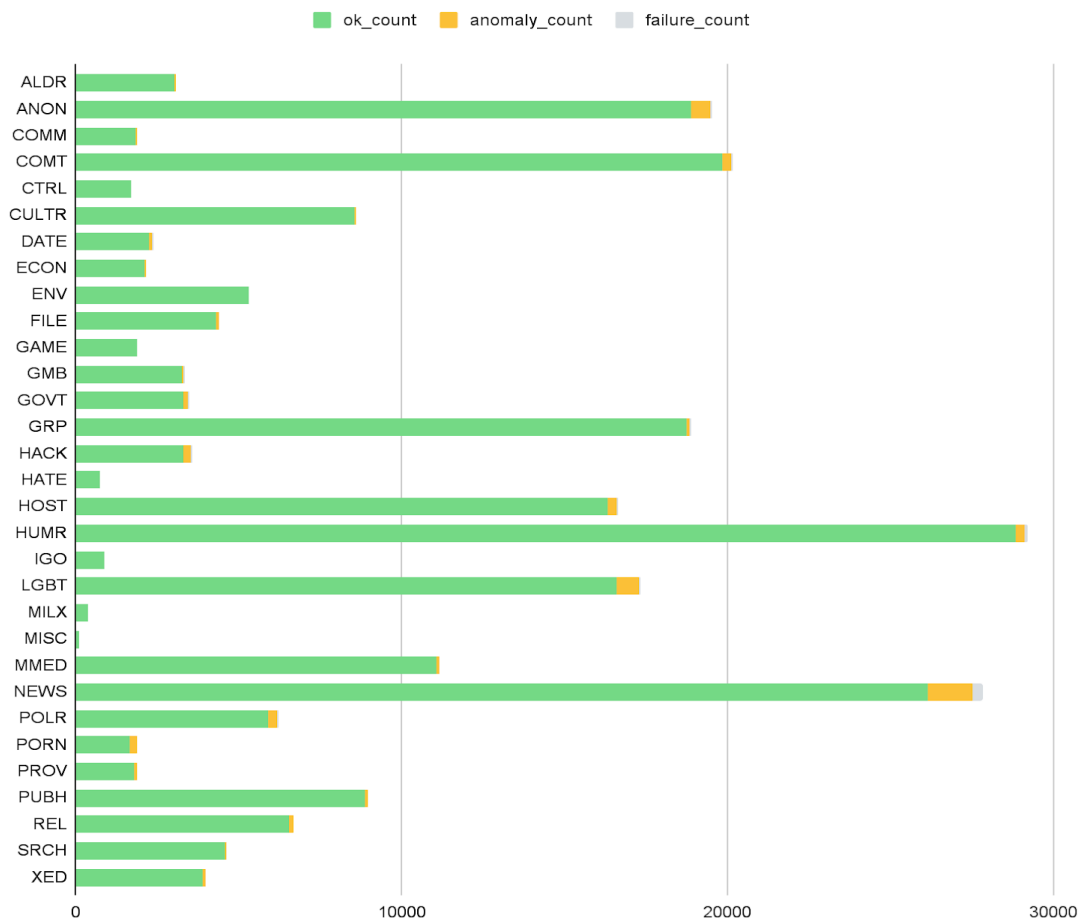
As a part of this study, network measurements were collected through OONI Probe software tests, with the period of testing from January to June, The result showed that among 43 of 1730 ULRs/Websites are blocked or hijacked. In addition to this, results of the heuristics analysis reported that 43 domains have been potentially blocked by DNS tampering through redirecting to 2 IP addresses: ['10.10.10.1'] and ['36.37.242.94']. Although these two do not have any blockpages, it is likely that they are used as methods of blocking by ISP VIETTEL (CAMBODIA) PTE., LTD. (AS38623), S.I Group (AS38623) and CAMGSM Company Ltd (AS17976). These 43 websites are comprised of categories as in the chart below:

Number of domains blocked by category
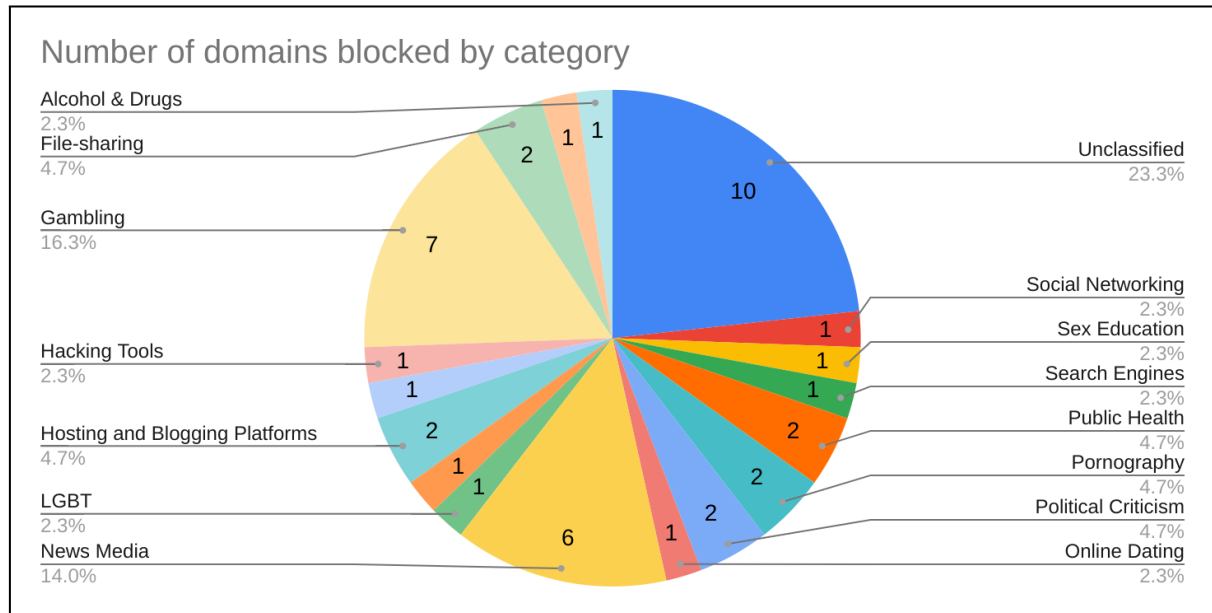
In this report, selected websites in Cambodia are found to be blocked through DNS tampering by an Internet Service Provider (ISP) listed in the table as follows:

Domain	Website category
www.cannabis.info*	Alcohol & Drugs
guardster.com	Anonymization and circumvention tools
adultfriendfinder.com	Online Dating
www.appzplanet.com	File-sharing
www.serials.ws	File-sharing
www.888casino.com	Gambling
www.carnivalcasino.com	Gambling
www.casino.com	Gambling
www.casinotropez.com	Gambling
www.europacasino.com	Gambling
www.partypoker.com	Gambling
www.sportsinteraction.com*	Gambling

Domain	Website category
www.ebuddy.com*	Social Networking
www.blackhat.be	Hacking Tools
www.nazi-lauck-nsdapao.com	Hate Speech
pingomatic.com	Hosting and Blogging Platforms
technorati.com	Hosting and Blogging Platforms
www.hrcr.org*	Human Rights Issues
www.samesexmarriage.ca	LGBT
www.almanar.com.lb	News Media
www.phnompenhpost.com	News Media
khmer.cambodiadaily.com	News Media
stubes.info*	News Media
www.kirivong.com*	News Media
www.ruf-ch.org*	News Media
dailystormer.name	Political Criticism
www.cnrp7.org*	Political Criticism
alt.com	Pornography
www.wetplace.com	Pornography
apps.crowdtangle.com	Public Health
coronavirus-map.com*	Public Health
www.mamma.com	Search Engines
www.teenhealthfx.com	Sex Education
mixi.jp	Unclassified
secure.friendfinder.com	Unclassified
www.anonymizer.com	Unclassified
www.rotten.com*	Unclassified
anonnews.org*	Unclassified
moqavemat.ir*	Unclassified
veracrypt.codeplex.com*	Unclassified
www.fring.com*	Unclassified
www.pokerroom.com*	Unclassified
www.volcanomail.com*	Unclassified

Note: Websites marked with asterisk (*) were not accessible at the time of writing.

Two of the 43 websites blocked are www.cnrp7.org and www.hrcr.org via DNS blocking methods. The former is a website of the Cambodia National Rescue Party, recently known as Candlelight Party and is currently the official opposition to ruling the Cambodia People

Party. It was found blocked as it was redirected to IP address 36.37.242.94, although this occurred only once during the reporting period. Whereas the latter is a Human & Constitutional Rights Resource Page, no longer updated since 2008. It was also found to be redirected to the same IP address on 27 June 2022. This IP address is likely to be a sign of blocking by the ISP Viettel Cambodia.

However, these sites were found no longer accessible at time of writing. The current website of the Candlelight Party (candlelightparty.org) was not tested on OONI during the period.

Instant messaging

The result of OONI Probe running from Jan to June 2022 of 2967 Facebook measurement, 2977 Telegram measurement, 2965 whatApp measurement and 2959 Signal measurement show that these platforms haven't been blocked from Internet service providers.

Website	measurement_count	ok_count	Confirm_Count	anomaly_count	failure_count
Facebook	2967	2961	0	6	0
Telegram	2977	2950	0	27	0
WhatApp	2965	2941	0	24	0
Signal	2959	2946	0	13	0

Circumvention tools

The OONI Probe testing result and the heuristic result report showed the tools in the Circumvention with the number of measurement count and anomaly count which was listed in the below table haven't been blocked.

Circumvention	measurement_count	measurement_ok	anomaly_count	failure_count
PSIPHON	2987	2946	41	0
Tor	37	33	4	0
Tor Snowflake	20	18	2	0

Conclusion and recommendations

News and other websites are periodically blocked in Cambodia, particularly those that disseminate information that could be perceived as a threat to the ruling government. Several cases of internet censorship and surveillance have been reported in Cambodia over

the last decade. On the 27 and 28 2018 election day, 15 websites of the independent news like voice of America's Khmer service, Radio Free Asia's Khmer service, Voice of Democracy, Vayo FM Radio, Monorom.info and the news site of the Independent Network for Social Justice. were blocked by ISPs through the order from the government authorities. Press freedom and internet freedom in Cambodia are increasingly under threat. In 2022, Cambodia was classified as "Not Free". People are afraid to express their views or opinions online, especially those who are critical of the government. The Cambodian government has used the existing laws and legal regulations and developed new ones to increase interference. Censorship has dramatically increased in Cambodia in recent years through different forms. The forceful imposition of legal and non-legal measures by the Cambodian government against targeted groups or individuals have negatively restricted the exercise of freedom of expression and internet freedoms.

OONI data showed 43 highly likely blocked websites that are censored by DNS, mainly by VIETTEL (CAMBODIA) PTE., LTD. (AS38623), S.I Group (AS38623) and CAMGSM Company Ltd (AS17976). These websites include news and media websites, and thus raises concern about press freedom, internet freedom and censorship in Cambodia. However, as data from Cambodia currently do not show any block pages, more measurements may be needed in the next round of reporting to make more substantial conclusions.

Based on the analysis and findings of the report, we reiterate the commendations made by the OHCHR. So, it is recommended that the State review and revise its current and pending legislation, including the Sub-Decree on National Internet Gateway and the amendments to the Press Law and the draft laws on cybercrimes and on access to information to avoid the use of vague terminology and overly broad restrictions. The UN Human Rights Committee further recommended the State to ensure that in the formulation and enforcement of its legislation, including Ministerial Sub-Decrees, any restrictions on the exercise of freedom of expression and association comply with the strict requirements of articles 19 (3) and 22 of the Covenant.

iMAP State of Internet Censorship Report 2022

COUNTRY: HONG KONG

By Independent Researchers (Anonymous),
Siti Nurliza Samsudin (Sinar Project) and Kelly Koh (Sinar Project)

Key Findings

- In 2019 and early 2020, citizens of Hong Kong demonstrated widespread Anti-ELAB (Anti Extradition Law Amendment Bill) protests in response to the amendment bill on extradition conditions for fugitive offenders proposed by the Hong Kong government.
- On June 30, 2020, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress unanimously decided to enact and implement the Hong Kong National Security Law.
- In January 2021, a local ISP "Hong Kong Broadband Network", responded to media inquiries, affirming their execution of censorship was responding to the request from the Hong Kong Police Force on the grounds of National Security.
- Since the enactment of the Hong Kong national security law, up until now, at least four political and dissident-related websites have been nationally blocked on national security grounds. The four websites were related to political criticism and human rights issues.
- There were a total of 1,416,459 OONI measurements of web connectivity recorded in Hong Kong during the first half of 2022. This came from the testing of 2228 domains via 30 local ASNs and 18 foreign ASNs.
- The broadly used censorship method in Hong Kong for the censored websites in scope is DNS tampering, followed by very little TCP and TLS connection interference.
- Depicting from the OONI Probe measuring results, there is no conspicuous or known censorship carried out on four major Instant Messaging Apps and circumvention tools.

Introduction

Since the enactment of the Hong Kong national security law, up until now, at least four political and dissident-related websites have been nationally blocked on national security grounds. Freedom of speech, civil society, and pro-democratic press and publication also suffered from high-pressure crackdowns from local authorities, as reported in the 135th session of the UN Human Rights committee.

The Open Observatory of Network Interference (OONI), Sinar Project, and a group of independent Hong Kong researchers collaborated on a joint study. Throughout this report, the team examines whether internet censorship events persist in the country through the collection and analysis of network measurements.

This study aims to increase the transparency of internet controls in Hong Kong. This report will provide information about the network landscape and internet penetration levels of Hong Kong, its legal environment concerning freedom of expression, access to information, and privacy, as well as cases of censorship in the country. The remaining parts of the report document this study's methodology and key findings.

Selected scope of ISPs in this report:
- AS4515 & AS4760 & AS38819 - PCCW HKT
- AS9231 & AS131872 - China Mobile Hong Kong
- AS9269 & AS9381 & AS10103 - Hong Kong Broadband Network
- AS9304 & AS10118 - Hutchison Global Communications (Hong Kong)
- AS9908 - HK Cable TV
- AS17924 - SmarTone Mobile Communications

Background

Hong Kong is a special administrative region of China[1], an ex-colony of the United Kingdom, and was previously known as one of the most popular free ports and major trade centres in Asia. This land has a population of roughly 7.2 million[2] with a total of 100% urban population[3], inclusively spanning across multi-ethnicity and different religions[3] as well.

Historically, Great Britain signed the "Sino-British Joint Declaration" with the People's Republic of China to resolve the "Agreement on the future of Hong Kong" for both countries. China regained sovereignty to the ex-colony in July 1997 and "preserves Hong Kong's familiar legal system and the rights and freedoms enjoyed there." [4] Different from China, Hong Kong looks up to the principle of "One Country, Two Systems" [5], the very foundation laid in the organic law "Hong Kong Basic Law" [6].

Politically, Hong Kong has been governed by a hybrid regime[7] since July 1997. The Chief Executive is the head of government[8]. The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress is in charge of appointing the elected Chief Executive[8]. Chief Executive candidates are vetted and only approved by the Committee for Safeguarding National Security without a straightforward appealing mechanism[9].

In 2019 and early 2020, citizens of Hong Kong demonstrated widespread Anti-ELAB(Anti Extradition Law Amendment Bill) protests in responding to the amendment bill on extradition conditions for fugitive offenders proposed by the Hong Kong government. On June 30, 2020, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress unanimously decided[10][11] to enact and implement the Hong Kong National Security Law, a countermeasure to the mass protest on the street and establishing the legislative power for local authorities to censorships based on national security grounds.

Legal environment

Hong Kong Basic Law

The Hong Kong Basic Law, which served as organic law, and is also seen as a constitutional document[6] by the Hong Kong government, has guaranteed that all residents of Hong Kong are equal before the law and possess inviolable rights to "freedom of speech, of the press and of publication; freedom of association, of assembly, of procession and of demonstration; and the right and freedom to form and join trade unions, and to strike." [12]

Legislative context

There are three major criminal laws currently ruling computer crimes in Hong Kong:
- Cap. 106 Telecommunications Ordinance
  - Section 27A   Unauthorized access to computer by telecommunications
- Cap. 200 Crimes Ordinance
  - Section 60   Destroying or damaging property
  - Section 161   Access to computer with criminal or dishonest intent

Over the past ten years, some computer crime cases have been dismissed differently because of frail to no evidence of the defendant purposefully stealing or without authorization to gain information from online information systems.

For instance, on July 3, 2019, a flight passenger Chan was released from court with a bind-over condition[13], only that he found out the electronic boarding pass website leaked information to other users by changing a few characters in the web address field. In this court case, Chan stated he had immediately notified the airline company and the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data right after discovering the vulnerability. However, there were no replies from both parties after three weeks. Instead, Chan was then arrested and prosecuted for "unauthorized access to computer by telecommunications" by the authorities, accusing Chan of having accessed the personal information of other passengers.

A side note to better illustrates the legislative landscape would be the recent judicial review filed by Hong Kong citizen Cheuk-Kin Kwok. The applicant hopes to stop the government from nullifying vaccination exemption letters through a declaration in the Gazette. However, soon after the court ruling in favour of Kwok, Chief Execute John Lee Ka-Chiu amended the law, empowering concrete legal rights to the health secretary in nullifying exemption letters upon "reasonable grounds".

Also, given that the current ruling party in Hong Kong took sides with Beijing, this curated great convenience for the government and pro-Beijing parties on policy-making and legislative changes. For example, on October 21, 2022, the Hong Kong government published in the Gazette an amendment bill proposal to the Cap. 138A "Pharmacy and Poisons Regulations" to further restrict antipyretic drug sales[14]. Without any opposition from the Legislative Council, drugs like aspirin and paracetamol will be added to the "Schedule 1" list of poisons in a year. General citizens then can only purchase simplex painkillers like Tylenol and Panadol (common brand names for paracetamol) from registered pharmacies, dispensaries, government-sanctioned "listed sellers of poisons", or clinics. On the complementary side, Cap. 134 "Dangerous Drugs Ordinance" rules that nobody can possess poison listed in "Schedule 1" or be fined or imprisoned for up to 7 years.

Hong Kong National Security Law & Legislative Reform

Currently, there are a total of 66 articles inside the Hong Kong National Security Law in effect, with a prominent count of 3 articles affecting the global population:

- **Article 38**: This Law shall apply to offences under this Law committed against the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region from outside the Region by a person who is not a permanent resident of the Region.
- **Article 43**: ... the department for safeguarding national security of the Police Force of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region may ... <u>requiring a person, who is suspected, on reasonable grounds, of having in possession information or material relevant to investigation, to answer questions and furnish such information or produce such material</u> ...
- **Article 47**: The courts of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region shall obtain a certificate from the Chief Executive to certify whether an act involves national security

or whether the relevant evidence involves State secrets when such questions arise in the adjudication of a case. The certificate shall be binding on the courts.

As of writing, no court judgements or valuable legislative perspectives give valid explanations and justification for cyber crimes charges using the Hong Kong National Security Law.

The Law Reform Commission of Hong Kong has gathered a cybercrime-specific legislative reforming committee[15]. On July 2022, the sub-committee published a consultation paper[16]. Inside, it proposes five cybercrime categories: "illegal access to program or data", "illegal interception of computer data", "illegal interference of computer data", "illegal interference of computer system", and "making available or possessing a device or data for committing a crime" in the documents from the committee.

Reported cases of internet censorship

ISP officially confirms national censorship

The first censorship happened in January 2021[17][18][19]. The website "HKChronicles" displays doxxed personal information of police officers, pro-Beijing members of the Legislative Council, and a revelation of graphics and videos depicting police brutalities since the 2019 Anti-ELAB(Anti Extradition Law Amendment Bill) social movement.

Later that month, a local major Internet Service Provider(ISP), "Hong Kong Broadband Network", responded to media inquiries[20][21], affirming their execution of censorship was responding to the request from the Hong Kong Police Force on the grounds of National Security. It is the first time a local ISP has come out and revealed that authorities have been exercising administrative power granted by the Hong Kong National Security Law to perform censorship nationwide. Other local ISPs have not responded to media inquiries directly, only stating that the company will follow local regulations[22].

Examining internet censorship in Hong Kong

A group of independent Hong Kong researchers, in collaboration with the Sinar Project and with assistance from the Open Observatory of Network Interference (OONI), performed a study on internet censorship in Hong Kong. This study aimed to understand whether and to what extent censorship events occurred in Hong Kong during the testing period.

The sections below document the findings of this study.

Findings

This study collected network measurements through OONI Probe software tests performed across different local vantage points in Hong Kong between January 1, 2022, and June 30, 2022. The tests resulted in four types of results:

- **OK**: Successful measurements (i.e. no sign of internet censorship)
- **Anomaly**: Measurements that provided signs of potential blocking (however, false
- positives can occur)
- **Confirmed**: Measurements from automatically confirmed blocked websites (e.g. a block page was served)
- **Failure**: Failed experiments

Blocking of Websites

While there had been no confirmed blocked websites on OONI during the six-month period, censorship was found across four websites based on news reports and measurements on OONI Explorer:

- **Blocking of a website about doxxed pro-Beijing individuals and police officers.** The Hong Kong authorities have blocked access to hkchronicles.com. A website created by Naomi Chan to display personal information about individuals with a pro-Beijing political stance, police officers, and their family members in Hong Kong.
- **Blocking of a museum website about the Tiananmen Square massacre.** The Hong Kong authorities, without public denying, blocked access to 8964museum.com, created by academics and pro-democratic individuals, to observe the remembrance of the "June 4 Incident" back at 1989 China Tiananmen Square.
- **Blocking of a political website about the 2021 Hong Kong Charter.** The Hong Kong Police Force has reportedly censored access to the political website 2021hkcharter.com, created by a few political leads in exile who hope to unite diaspora Hongkongers.
- **Blocking of a website from Hong Kong Watch.** The UK-based charity, which advocates monitoring the implementation of the Sino-British Joint Declaration, has its website hongkongwatch.org censored in Hong Kong.

The below table shows the total measurements, and individual result counts of OONI web connectivity measurements in Hong Kong over the above said period:

Measurements	OK	Anomaly	Confirmed	Failure
1416459	1345667	52173	0	18619

The following list is the local Hong Kong ISPs probed within the above said period:

ASN	ASN Name	ASN Ownership/ Description	ASN Registration Country	Measurement Count
AS3363	HKUST-AS-HK	Hong Kong University of Science and Technology	HK	34
AS3661	ERX-CUHKNET	The Chinese University of Hong Kong	HK	162
AS4515	ERX-STAR	HKT Limited	HK	1400
AS4528	HKU-AS-HK	The University of Hong Kong	HK	41
AS4760	HKTIMS-AP	HKT Limited	HK	770352
AS9231	IPEOPLESNET-AS-AP	China Mobile Hong Kong Company Limited	HK	2115
AS9269	HKBN-AS-AP	Hong Kong Broadband Network Ltd.	HK	162381
AS9304	HUTCHISON-AS-AP	HGC Global Communications Limited	HK	17856

ASN	ASN Name	ASN Ownership/ Description	ASN Registration Country	Measurement Count
AS9381	HKBNES-AS-AP	HKBN Enterprise Solutions HK Limited	HK	94085
AS9908	HKCABLE2-HK-AP	HK Cable TV Ltd	HK	35568
AS10103	HKBN-AS-AP	HK Broadband Network Ltd.	HK	3003
AS10118	HTCL-IAS-HK-AP	Hutchison Telephone Company Limited	HK	26510
AS17924	SMARTONE-MB-AS-AP	SmarTone Mobile Communications Ltd	HK	153575
AS24000	LIHGL-AS-AP	24.hk global BGP	HK	7346
AS24002	SCMP-AS-HK-AP	South China Morning Post Publishers Limited. English	HK	7
AS38008	APERTURE-AS-AP	Aperture Science Limited	HK	100
AS38819	HKCSL-AS-AP	HKCSL GPRS NETWORK	HK	4130
AS58453	CMI-INT-HK	Level 30, Tower 1	HK	13446

ASN	ASN Name	ASN Ownership/ Description	ASN Registration Country	Measurement Count
AS63888	TISP-AS	TISP LIMITED	HK	20
AS64096	BIH-GLOBAL	BIH-Global Internet Harbor	HK	1
AS131685	SUN-HK	Sun Network Hong Kong Limited	HK	13532
AS133073	SZKF-AS-AP	TELEGLOBAL COMMUNICATION SERVICES LIMITED	HK	2693
AS133752	LEASEWEB-APAC-HKG-10	Leaseweb Asia Pacific pte. ltd.	HK	424
AS135330	ADCDATACOM-AS-AP	ADCDATA.COM	HK	13
AS135391	AOFEI-HK	AOFEI DATA INTERNATIONAL COMPANY LIMITED	HK	1586
AS136907	HWCLOUDS-AS-AP	HUAWEI CLOUDS	HK	4626
AS137872	PEOPLESPHONE-HK	China Mobile Hong Kong Company Limited	HK	258
AS137969	HKBIL-AS-AP	HONG KONG BRIDGE INFO-TECH LIMITED	HK	73

ASN	ASN Name	ASN Ownership/ Description	ASN Registration Country	Measurement Count
AS138997	EDCL-AS-AP	Eons Data Communications Limited	HK	1934
AS141677	NATHOSTS-AS-AP	Nathosts Limited	HK	46292

The following list is the foreign Hong Kong ISPs probed within the above said period:

ASN	ASN Name	ASN Ownership/ Description	ASN Registration Country	Measurement Count
AS6939	HURRICANE		US	13541
AS8075	MICROSOFT-CORP-MSN-AS-BLOCK		US	37
AS9009	M247		GB	11653
AS13335	CLOUDFLARENET	Cloudflare	US	7229
AS16509	AMAZON-02	Amazon	US	9
AS21859	ZEN-ECN		US	15
AS22363	PHMGMT-AS1		US	3161
AS32242	ULTRA-KING		VG	4
AS45102	ALIBABA-CN-NET	Alibaba US Technology Co., Ltd.	CN	7383
AS54574	DMIT-LEGACY		US	1261
AS55720	GIGABIT-MY	Gigabit Hosting Sdn Bhd	MY	299
AS60068	CDN77	Datacamp Limited	GB	4501

AS132203	TENCENT-NET-AP-CN	Tencent Building, Kejizhongyi Avenue	CN	20
AS136787	TEFINCOMSA-AS-AP	TEFINCOM S.A.	PA	2208
AS199524	GCORE		LU	2
AS206092	SECFIREWALLAS		GB	1514
AS206264	AMARUTU-TECHNOLOGY		SC	38
AS398704	STACKS-INC-01		US	21

At the beginning of 2021, Hong Kong authorities had, first in history, executed the administrative power to censor political and dissident-related websites. The first website being censored was "HKChronicles", happening at noon on January 6, 2021[23]. Netizens of Hong Kong started experiencing a widespread problem of being unable to browse this website. A local Internet Service Provider, "Hong Kong Broadband Network", later officially confirmed the censorship, stating their action was responding to the executive decisions from the Hong Kong Police Force and also relevant legistlations[20][21].

Since then, at least three more websites and multiple aliases of the censored website have been blocked[24][25][26] inside Hong Kong across the entire year of 2021 and have remained until now. By analysing OONI measurements collected over the first half of 2022, it is possible to detect and inspect how websites are being blocked in the country.

The following charts depict precisely the four known censored websites with their seven domain names out of 2228 domains tested. The seven domains by category are as follows:

Domain	Category
hkchronicles.com	Political Criticism
8964museum.com	Political Criticism
blockedbyhk.com	Political Criticism
hkleaks.info	Political Criticism
www.hongkongwatch.org	Human Rights Issues
2021hkcharter.com	Political Criticism
goodhope.school	Political Criticism

Note: blockedbyhk.com, goodhope.school and hkleaks.info were alias domains for HKChronicles.

OONI measurements of blocked websites in Hong Kong
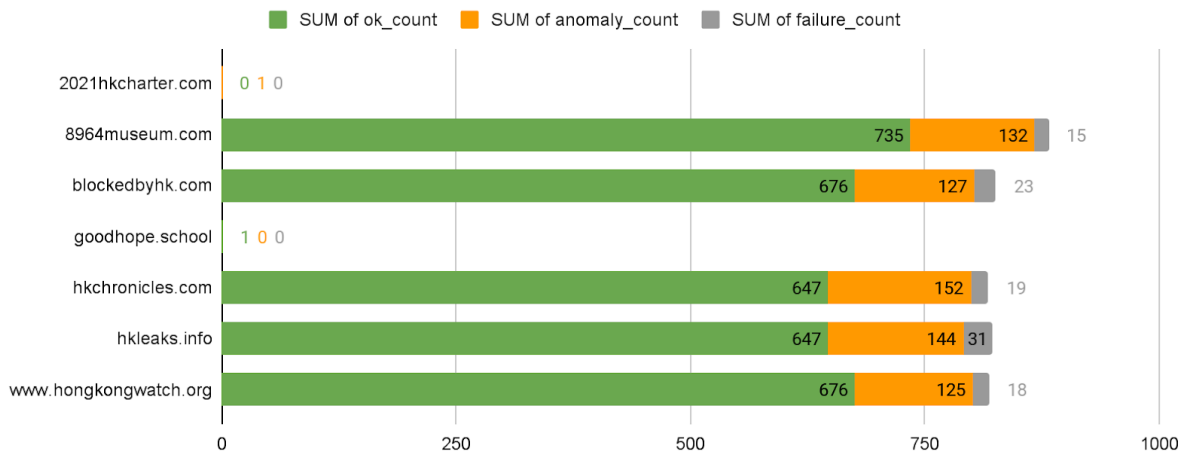
Censorship technologies

The following charts depict precisely the four known censored websites with their seven domain names.

Types of Blocking

DNS

- dns.confirmed - one of the returned IPs matches an IP known to be used to implement blocking
- dns.no_ipv4 - no IPv4 address was returned
- dns.bogon - a bogon IP address was returned
- dns.nxdomain - we got an NXDOMAIN response from the probe, but we got a valid response from the control vantage point
- dns.inconsistent - our DNS consistency heuristics determined the returned IP to be inconsistent
- dns.user_ip - The particular measurement included the IP address of the probe in the DNS query response and since OONI scrubs sensitive data from measurements the IP was replaced with [scrubbed].

HTTP

These are all blocking types related to plaintext HTTP requests:

- http.confirmed - the returned page is a known blockpage
- http.http_diff - the page doesn't match based on our page consistency heuristics
- http.connection_reset - we got a connection reset to a plaintext HTTP request
- http.connection_closed - the connection was closed before all data was transmitted
- http.connection_timeout - the connection timed out before we could retrieve all the data
- http.generic_failure - this is a generic error from legacy OONI probes

TLS

These are all blocking types related to TLS:

- tls.connection_reset - a reset packet was seen after the client sent the ClientHello packet
- tls.connection_closed - the connection was closed after the ClientHello
- tls.connection_timeout - the connection timed out after the ClientHello
  - All of the above can also have the _after_hello suffix, indicating that the event happened after the client sent the ClientHello packet
- tls.mitm - The DNS is consistent, but the TLS certificate validation failed. This suggest a TLS man-in-the-middle
- tls.generic_failure - generic error from legacy OONI probes
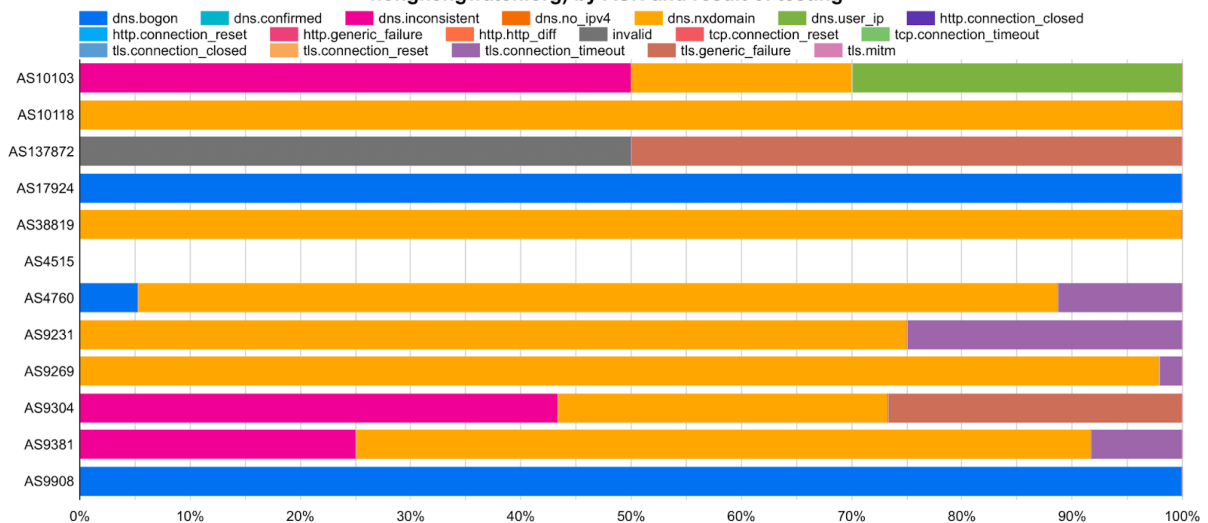
(Fig.1 - Censorship Methodologies by local ISPs with respect to the four websites)
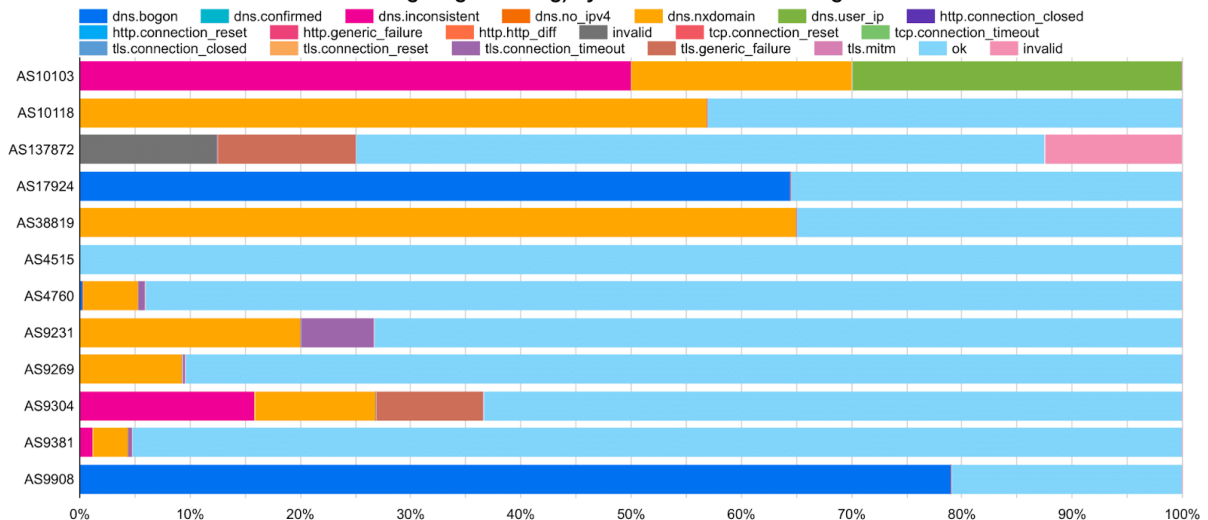
(Fig.2 - Censorship Methodologies vs All nation-wide test results by local ISPs including OK and Invalid results)

From January to June 2022, there are a total of 12 ASNs possessed by six network operators:

- AS4515 & AS4760 & AS38819 - PCCW HKT
- AS9231 & AS131872 - China Mobile Hong Kong
- AS9269 & AS9381 & AS10103 - Hong Kong Broadband Network
- AS9304 & AS10118 - Hutchison Global Communications (Hong Kong)
- AS9908 - HK Cable TV
- AS17924 - SmarTone Mobile Communications

Among OONI measurements collected over this period, more than 3000 tests were performed on all these ASNs for these four censored websites. Notably, AS4515, owned by PCCW HKT, is a network primarily serving the finance, business industry and public sectors, such as AASTOCKS.COM, Ruijiang Group, Cathay Pacific, The Bank of East Asia, and more[27]. By comparing figures 1 and 2 specifically on this ASN, it clearly shows no signs of internet traffic in these service and sector categories being censored or altered in a way that complies with the executive order issued by local authorities.

Chart 1: OONI measurements of selected domain by date and result of testing
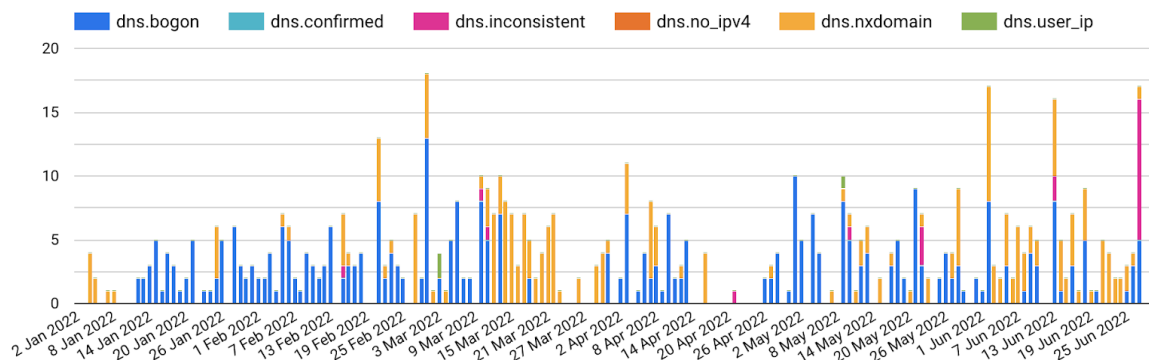
Chart 2: OONI measurements of selected domain by ASN and result of testing
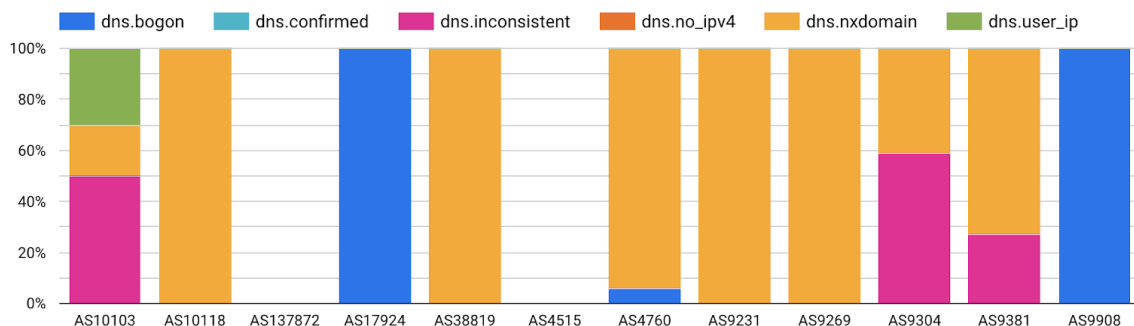
(Fig. 3 - DNS censorship/anomaly results by local ISPs)

Chart 1: OONI measurements of selected domain by date and result of testing

http.connection_closed   http.connection_reset   http.generic_failure   http.http_diff

Chart 2: OONI measurements of selected domain by ASN and result of testing

http.connection_closed   http.connection_reset   http.generic_failure   http.http_diff
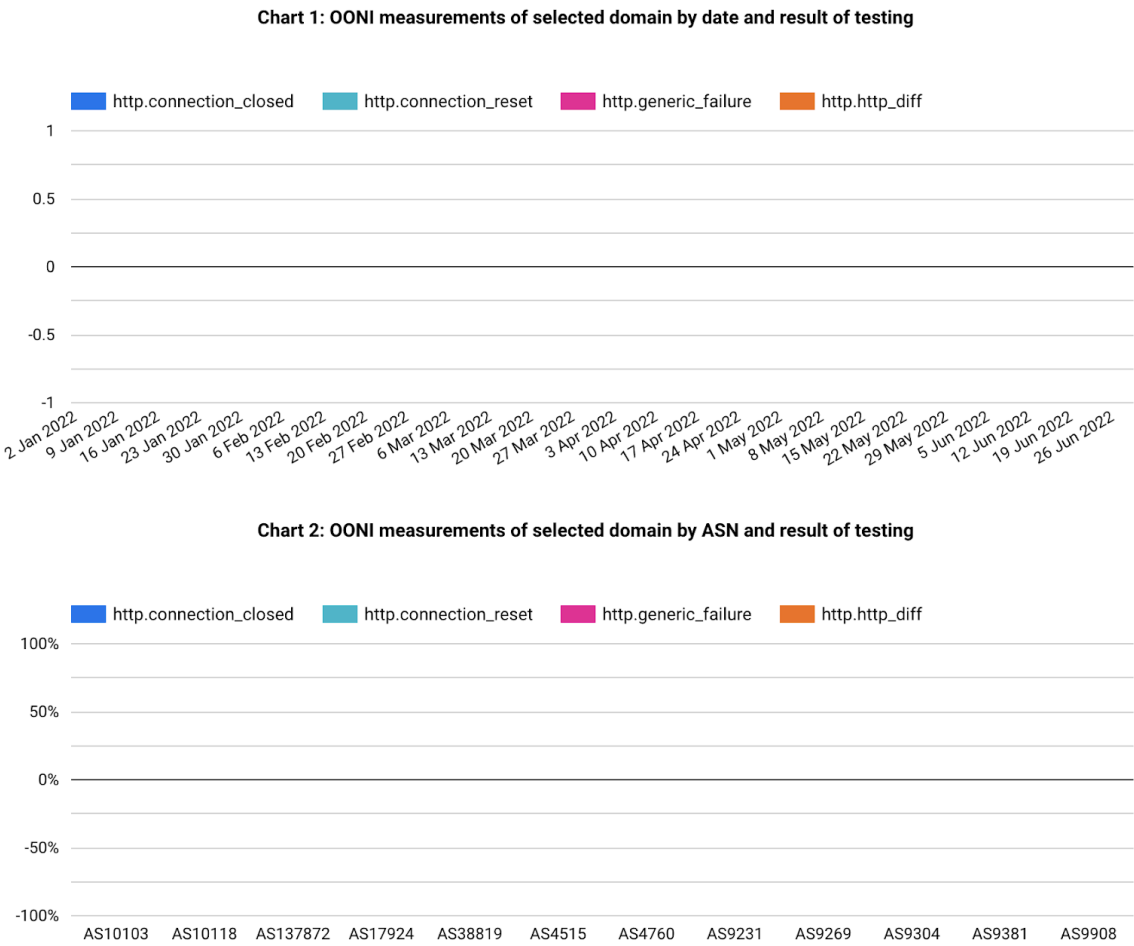
(Fig. 4 - HTTP censorship by local ISPs)

Chart 1: OONI measurements of selected domain by date and result of testing
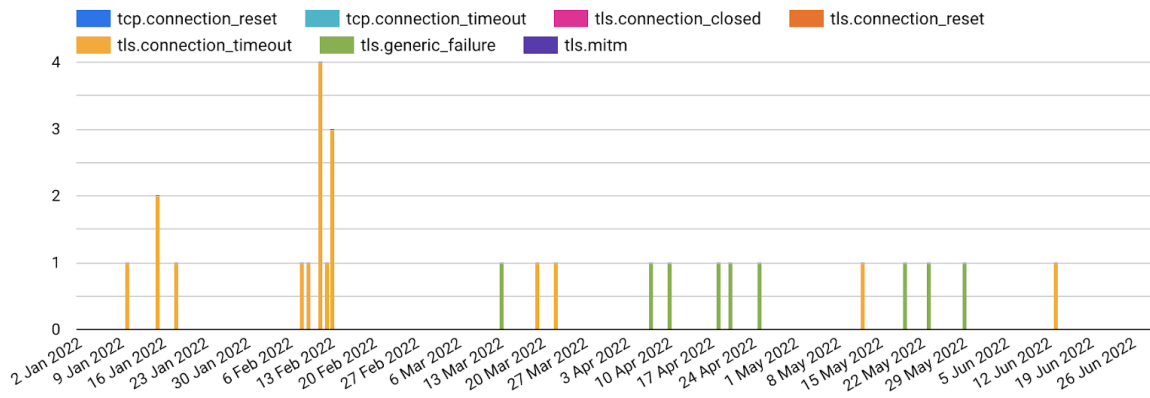
Chart 2: OONI measurements of selected domain by ASN and result of testing
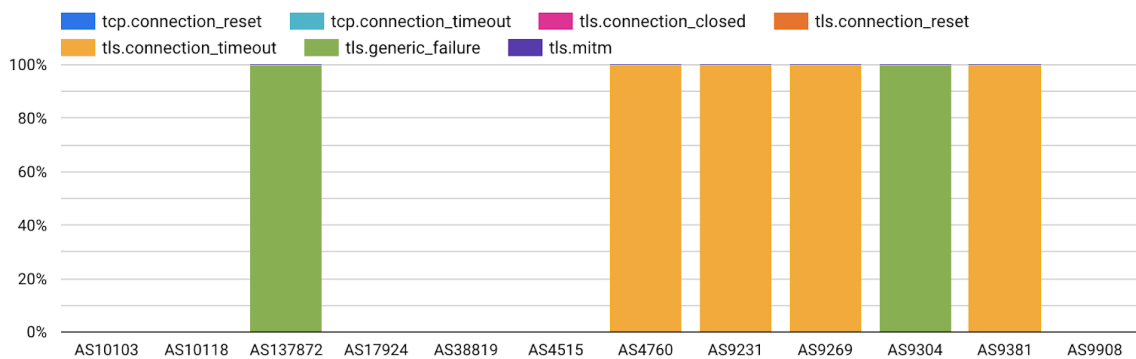
the broadly used censorship method in Hong Kong for the censored websites in scope is "DNS tampering", followed by very little TCP and TLS connection interference.
(Fig. 5 - TCP and TLS censorship/interference by local ISPs)

Last, by comparing Figures 3, 4 and 5 it tells The result also suggests that residential use connectivity is censored while commercial and public sectors can be largely immune.

Blocking of Instant Messaging Apps

Depicting from the OONI Probe measuring results, no conspicuous or known censorship is carried out on four major Instant Messaging Apps. The table below shows the total and individual measurement results for each of the application services:

	Facebook Messenger	Signal	Telegram	Whatsapp
Total Measurements	17180	16804	17138	17114
OK	16228	16270	16697	16617
Anomaly	952	534	441	451
Failure	0	0	0	46

Blocking of Circumvention Tools

The measurement results on the blocking of circumvention tools show no remarkable results. The table below tells the total and individual measurement results against each tool to use in circumventing nationwide censorship technologies:

	Psiphon	Tor	Tor Snowflake
Total Measurements	17084	17029	56
OK	16994	16935	44
Anomaly	90	94	12
Failure	0	0	0

Note: Anomalies detected from testing Tor Snowflake on AS4760 have been removed due to found errors in the OONI Probe (Example measurement).

Acknowledgement of Limitations

The examination of the findings of this study is limited to network measurements that were collected[28] from January 1 to June 30, 2022, to examine the most recent censorship trends and events and do not necessarily reflect a comprehensive view of internet censorship in Hong Kong. The test lists included a limited number of websites and it may be possible that websites outside of the lists are blocked.

Although the network measurements were collected from multiple local vantage points in Hong Kong, the running of OONI software testing was not consistent across all networks.

Conclusion

The objective of this study is to gain a better understanding of internet censorship events in Hong Kong through the collection and analysis of network measurements. To this end, OONI software tests were run across different local vantage points in Hong Kong to collect and analyse network measurement data that could help examine whether sites, instant messaging apps, and censorship circumvention tools were blocked. Some of the tests also run were designed to examine whether systems ("middleboxes") that could be responsible for censorship, surveillance, and traffic manipulation were present in the tested networks. Overall, the accessibility of 2228 domains was tested, and the network measurement data collected between January 1, 2022, to June 30 2022, was analysed.

The key findings of this study show that local ISPs in Hong Kong appear to primarily be implementing censorship through DNS hijacking and DNS-based censorship (in the case of blocking the four censored websites, for example).

As part of this study, four websites with multiple of their aliases domain names were confirmed to be blocked across 6 ISPs (PCCW HKT, China Mobile Hong Kong, Hong Kong Broadband Network, Hutchison Global Communications (Hong Kong), HK Cable TV, and SmarTone Mobile Communications) and their downstream providers as well. It is worth highlighting that PCCW HKT leaves its commercial and public sector networks to remain uncensored; only the residential lines are affected. On the positive side, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Telegram, Signal, Psiphon and the Tor network (vanilla) appeared to remain accessible across most ISPs presented in the OONI measurement test results.

Given the limited transparency around information controls in Hong Kong and the potential implications they may have on human rights, we encourage ISPs to disclose their motivation and justification behind blocking sites and services. We also encourage public debate based on the findings of this study around the necessity and proportionality of information controls.

iMAP State of Internet Censorship Report 2022

COUNTRY: INDONESIA

By Khairil Zhafri (EngageMedia), Pradipa P. Rasidi (Engage Media), Debby Kristin (EngageMedia), Siti Nurliza Samsudin (Sinar Project) and Kelly Koh (Sinar Project)

Key Findings

- In recent years, and with the COVID-19 pandemic increasing people's reliance on digital technologies and with it the role of ICT regulators, agencies such as the NTC have come under fire for the "politicization" of the country's telecommunications sector.[36] This was most apparent under the administration of former president Rodrigo Duterte, whose six-year presidency was marred by the systematic undermining of democratic institutions and countless attacks against critical media and activists.
- In June 2022, before Duterte's term of office ended, the NTC ordered internet service providers to block 26 websites,[37] including news sites Bulatlat and Pinoy Weekly, allegedly over their ties to "communist-terrorist groups". The same month, news website Rappler was once again ordered to shut down after the Securities and Exchange Commission upheld its ruling to revoke the media company's operating licence.
- Despite this, OONI network measurement data collected from 23 ISPs confirms the blocking in the Philippines of 16 websites from 1 January 2022 to 30 June 2022. All websites were blocked through DNS hijacking. This number is one of the lowest among the countries covered in the study.
- The blocked websites are related to gambling, pornography, anonymization and circumvention tools, social networking, and alternative culture.
- No significant censorship was found during the testing of instant messaging apps and circumvention tools, with the exception of Psiphon which recorded high anomalies and should be investigated further.

Country Background

Network landscape and internet penetration

Population: 270.2 million people[38]

Internet penetration rate: 69.8% in 2020[39], 73.70% in 2019/2020 vs 77.02% in 2021/2022[40]

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[36] Balinbin, A. L. (2020, July 8). Politicized media shutdown to drive away investors, says Fitch Solutions. BusinessWorld. https://www.bworldonline.com/editors-picks/2020/07/09/304153/politicized-media-shutdown-to-drive-away-investors-says-fitch-solutions/

[37] NTC orders block to access of websites of CPP-NPA, alternative media, progressive groups. (2022, June 22). CNN Philippines. https://www.cnnphilippines.com/news/2022/6/22/NSA-Esperon-website-block-CPP-NPA-media-groups.html

[38] Hasil Sensus Penduduk 2020. (2021). Badan Pusat Statistik. https://www.bps.go.id/pressrelease/2021/01/21/1854/hasil-sensus-penduduk-2020.html

[39] Nurhayati-Wolff, H. (2021, August 16). Indonesia: internet penetration rate 2026. Statista. https://www.statista.com/statistics/254460/internet-penetration-rate-in-indonesia/

[40] Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia. (2022). Hasil Survei Profil Internet Indonesia 2022. APJII. https://apjii.or.id/content/read/39/559/Hasil-Survei-Profil-Internet-Indonesia-2022

Mobile broadband: 355 million subscriptions – the third largest in the world after India and China[41]

Fixed-line broadband: 11.7 million subscriptions[42]

Major mobile ISPs: Telkomsel (169.5 mil users), Indosat (60.3 mil), and XL Axiata (57.89 mil) – together controlling more than 80% of the mobile internet market[43]

Major fixed-line ISPs: Indihome (67.5%), First Media (3.88%), MNC (2.88%). There is also a high percentage of users using varieties of regional ISPs (12.8%)[44]

The government-linked Telkom Indonesia operates fixed-line broadband services as Indihome, Astinet, and DigiConnect, amongst others, and has a majority ownership in the mobile operator Telkomsel. Singapore state-owned Singtel also has significant ownership of Telkomsel. The joint venture between Qatari government-linked Ooredoo and Hong Kong-based CK Hutchison has majority ownership of Indosat while XL is a subsidiary of Axiata, a Malaysian government-linked corporation.

In the eastern Indonesian provinces of Maluku, North Maluku, West Papua, and Papua, Telkomsel owns most base transceiver station (BTS) towers,[45] making the company the dominant player in the region. Based on interviews conducted in 2019 with a Telkomsel representative and government officials in three localities in Maluku, the connectivity in the province relies on Telkomsel network for individual users and a government-subsidised network, which collaborate with either local ISPs or Telkom Indonesia.[46] Telkom Indonesia remains a market leader in Indonesia's network landscape since its founding.

Political context

Hypernationalist discourses have been growing in Indonesia over the past decade since the election of President Jokowi (Joko Widodo) in 2014, especially so after the blasphemy conviction of ethnic Chinese-Christian Jakarta governor, Basuki "Ahok" Tjahaja Purnama during his re-election campaign in 2017.[47] As a measure to downplay ideologies of political

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[41] International Trade Administration. (2022). Indonesia - Country Commercial Guide. U.S. Department of Commerce. https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/indonesia-information-and-telecommunications-technology

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Pahlevi, R. (2022, June 10). Ini Provider Internet yang Paling Banyak Digunakan di Indonesia. Databoks; Katadata. https://databoks.katadata.co.id/datapublish/2022/06/10/ini-provider-internet-yang-paling-banyak-digunakan-di-indonesia

[45] Oktarini, L., & Kawano, H. (2019). Telecommunication access business model options in Maluku and Papua, the less-favored business regions in Indonesia. Digital Policy, Regulation and Governance, 21(4), 384–401. https://doi.org/10.1108/DPRG-10-2018-0061

[46] Rasidi, P. P. (2019). [Interviews with Telkomsel representatives and government officials in Maluku: Ambon, Bula, and Geser Island].

[47] Hadiz, V. (2017, October 19). Behind Indonesia's illiberal turn. New Mandala. https://www.newmandala.org/indonesia-illiberal/

Islam,[48] and as a response to terrorist attacks and violent extremism that have scarred the country since its democratic reform in 1998, Jokowi's administration has been increasingly espousing the idea of Indonesia as diverse multicultural body politic being united together both by respect to a perceived uniqueness that borders cultural tokenism and the rule of a strong yet benevolent government.

These hypernationalist discourses have strong implications on internet censorship. On religious matters, Indonesia's policies sit awkwardly within what some scholars have called "godly nationalism", a nation-state modelled after acceptance of pluralist yet monotheistic orthodoxy.[49,50] While violent extremism is being cracked down and widely prevented through laws, heterodox religious teachings that go against the orthodoxy are similarly censored and even punished for being morally incorrect. This pursuit of moral correctness entails similar limitation towards LGBTQ+ communities and other sexual minorities. With a nationalistic bent, sexual minorities are condemned as contradicting "eastern values" ("*budaya ketimuran*") and accused of being imports of morally fraught lifestyle from the West.

Both cases hinge upon the tenets of Indonesian state ideology Pancasila, of which has been going through a critical revival in political discourses through government's active socialization amongst the citizenry.[51] The ambition of Jokowi's administration to build networked infrastructure across the country that reaches eastern Indonesia—often depicted as being "underdeveloped"—further entrenches the imagination of a vast archipelago being united under a benevolent central government.[52] The Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI or Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia), the official name for Indonesia, has been often evoked to produce this imagination of a strong, united state. This is particularly apparent in the governing of Papua and West Papua, two provinces with pro-independence movements that have faced constant military deployment. The slogan "safeguarding NKRI" has been evoked in the region to conjure the idea of a saviour state cultivating their less developed subjects, describing both Jokowi's administration infrastructure development and the internet throttling and blackouts in the region.[53,54] Similarly, the recent law on Private Electronic System Operators, which will be discussed below, is supported by nationalist narrative on the importance of safeguarding "Indonesian digital sovereignty".[55]

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[48] Wilson, I. (2016, November 2). Making enemies out of friends. New Mandala. https://www.newmandala.org/making-enemies-friends/

[49] Menchik, J. (2014). Productive intolerance: Godly nationalism in Indonesia. Comparative Studies in Society and History, 56(3), 591–621. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0010417514000267

[50] Bourchier, D. (2019). Two Decades of Ideological Contestation in Indonesia: From Democratic Cosmopolitanism to Religious Nationalism. Journal of Contemporary Asia, 49(5), 713–733. https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2019.1590620

[51] Heryanto, A. (2021, November 6). Pancasila Sejak Orde Baru. Kompas. https://www.kompas.id/baca/opini/2021/11/06/pancasila-sejak-orde-baru

[52] Bourchier, op. cit.

[53] Elisabeth, A. (2022, July 8). How internet blackouts violate the digital rights of Papuans. EngageMedia. https://engagemedia.org/2022/internet-blackouts-papua/

[54] Heryanto, A. (2019, September 6). Tensions in Papua and hyper-nationalism in Indonesia. The Jakarta Post. https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2019/09/06/tensions-in-papua-and-hyper-nationalism-in-indonesia.html

[55] Yusuf. (2022, August 4). Penerapan Tata Kelola PSE untuk Bangun Indonesia Digital Nation Berdaulat. Kementerian Komunikasi dan Informatika.

The hypernationalist discourse is embraced by politicians both of the ruling and opposition parties. In fact, as some scholars have argued, this discourse—as well as political Islam that seemingly oppose them—obscures the fact that political opposition is nonexistent in Indonesia.[56] Actors involved both in the ruling party and opposition parties are the same actors in the network of oligarchic elites. In his second term, Jokowi appointed Prabowo Subianto, who used to be his electoral rival in presidential elections in 2014 and 2019.

Like other countries in Southeast Asia, the information control situation in Indonesia is colored by the troll industry that is also interlocked with the country's influencer industry.[57,58] The oligarchic nature of Indonesia's political landscape sees trolls being mobilized not only to protect the Jokowi's administration interest, but also to fight in national and local electoral contest,[59] as well as to shield corporate interest—as were the case in social media campaigns defending land developers like Tommy Winata's PT Tirta Wahana Bali International in Bali's land reclamation project and tech unicorns that struggle with labor issues like Gojek.[60] Business and political interest tend to overlap, given that the country's parliament is composed of 55% businessmen[61] and having ministers like Nadiem Makarim who founded Gojek and Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan who holds the share of various mining companies.[62]

Human rights advocacy remains a challenge in the country. In addition to multiple arrests, surveillance, and troll and doxxing attacks,[63] cases of data breach in public and private sectors have occurred nine times in 2022 alone, even more in the preceding years.[64] The lack of data protection fuels the work of political trolls, while the recent law on Personal Data Protection is notable for allowing even more restriction, as will be discussed below. To add insult to the injury, some human rights activists support disbandment of organisations

https://aptika.kominfo.go.id/2022/08/penerapan-tata-kelola-pse-untuk-bangun-indonesia-digital-nation-berdaulat/

[56] Hadiz, op. cit.

[57] Rasidi, P. P. (in press). Of Play and Good Men: Moral Economy of Political Buzzing in Indonesia. In Y. Sastramidjaja (Ed.), Digital Technologies and Democracy in Southeast Asia. ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.

[58] Rudyansjah, T. & Rasidi, P. P. (2022). Virtual embodiment in physical realities: Brand buzzers and disciplined bodies in an Indonesian cyberscape. HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory, 12(2), 436–452. https://doi.org/10.1086/720302

[59] Wijayanto & Berenschot, W. (2021, October 3). Organisation and funding of social media propaganda. Inside Indonesia. https://www.insideindonesia.org/organisation-and-funding-of-social-media-propaganda

[60] Rasidi, P. P. (2016). [Interviews with "buzzer" digital strategists and fake account operators].

[61] Aidulsyah, F., Margiansyah, D., Kurniawan, F.E., Kusumaningrum, D., Sabilla, K., & Aini, Y.N. (2020). Peta Pebisnis di Parlemen: Potret Oligarki di Indonesia. Marepus Corner Working Paper No. 01. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344890558_PETA_PEBISNIS_DI_PARLEMEN_POTRET_OLIGARKI_DI_INDONESIA

[62] Coalruption: Elite Politik dalam Pusaran Bisnis Batu Bara. (2018). Jaringan Advokasi Tambang. https://www.jatam.org/coalruption-elit-politik-dalam-pusaran-bisnis-batu-bara/

[63] Southeast Asia Freedom of Expression Network. (2022). 2021 Digital Rights in Indonesia Situation Report: The Pandemic Might Be Under Control, but Digital Repression Continues. https://safenet.or.id/2022/03/in-indonesia-digital-repression-is-keep-continues/

[64] Aqil, A. M. I. (2022, August 24). Exposed: Data breaches on the rise in Indonesia. The Jakarta Post. https://www.thejakartapost.com/indonesia/2022/08/24/exposed-data-breaches-on-the-rise-in-indonesia.html

deemed threatening to national security,[65] and some others who now work for the government have defended government censorship in public.[66] Some academics accused the activists for building a patronage network with political elites to secure their economic interest.[67]

Legal environment

Freedom of expression

Article 27 and 45 of the Electronic Information and Transactions (ITE) Law No 11 of 2008

Articles 27 and 45 of the 2008 ITE Law[68] have been used to prosecute individuals who "knowingly and without authority" distribute, transmit, or make accessible electronic information or documents containing (i) material against propriety, (ii) gambling material, (iii) defamatory material, and (iv) material containing extortions or threats. Under Article 45, any individual satisfying any of the elements could be sentenced to imprisonment of up to 6 years, and/or a maximum fine of 1 billion rupiah. The 2016 amendment to Article 45 reduces the criminal sanction for the crime under Article 27(iii) regarding defamation to a maximum imprisonment term of 4 years and a fine of 750 million rupiah, in addition to clarifying that the provision for the dissemination of defamatory material is a crime by the complaint.[69]

2013 Law on Civil Society Organizations

The 2013 Civil Society Organizations Law[70] subjects civil society organisations (CSOs) to increased bureaucratic and discriminatory controls, authorizing government screening of all CSOs in the country. The law stipulates CSOs to various prohibitions and obligations to be able to obtain a permit to operate within the country, including prohibiting CSOs from propagating ideologies conflicting with the state ideology of Pancasila, which embraces the five principles of Indonesian nationalism; internationalism; consent or democracy; social prosperity; and belief in one God, thus directly infringing upon the rights of organisations to freedom of religion.

The law places severe limitations on the running of foreign-funded CSOs within the country. Article 52 of the law prohibits CSOs founded by foreign citizens from conducting any

[65] Huda, L. (2022, May 2). Activist Backs Police Plan to Disband Hizbut Tahrir. Tempo.co English Version. https://en.tempo.co/read/871575/activist-backs-police-plan-to-disband-hizbut-tahrir

[66] Ansyari, S. & Rahmat, A. (2019, September 13). Teten Masduki: Wajar Mereka Marah. VIVA.co.id. https://www.viva.co.id/berita/nasional/1234026-teten-masduki-wajar-mereka-marah

[67] Mudhoffir, A. M. (2021, June 9). Aktivisme Borjuis: Mengapa Kelas Menengah Reformis Gagal Mempertahankan Demokrasi?. Project Multatuli. https://projectmultatuli.org/aktivisme-borjuis-kelas-menengah-reformis-gagal/

[68] Undang-Undang Nomor 11 Tahun 2008 tentang Informasi dan Transaksi Elektronik, (2008). https://jdih.kominfo.go.id/produk_hukum/view/id/167/t/undangundang+nomor+11+tahun+2008+tanggal+21+april++2008

[69] Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 19 Tahun 2016 tentang Perubahan atas Undang-Undang Nomor 11 Tahun 2008 Tentang Informasi dan Transaksi Elektronik, (2016). https://jdih.kominfo.go.id/produk_hukum/view/id/555/t/undangundang+nomor+19+tahun+2016+tanggal+25+november+2016

[70] Undang-undang No 16 Tahun 2013 tentang Organisasi Kemasyarakatan, (2013), https://peraturan.bpk.go.id/Home/Details/38876/uu-no-17-tahun-2013

intelligence or political activities, or any activities which may "disrupt the stability and integrity" of Indonesia or which may "disrupt diplomatic relations".

Article 52(g) prohibits the "raising of funds from the Indonesian community"; and (h) "the use of facilities and infrastructures of government agencies and institutions". Violations of such repressive provisions may result in the dissolution of the CSO.

The law has been used to threaten labour unions of disbandment in 2014[71] and disband Islamist organisation Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia in 2017 with accusations of "promoting the establishment of a caliphate".[72]

Press freedom

Press Law No 40 of 1999

Article 4 of the 1999 Press Law[73] guarantees freedom of the press as a basic human right for every citizen. The law contains many positive stipulations which serve to protect the freedom of the press. 4(2) provides that the national press shall not have censorship or broadcast limitations imposed upon it, while 4(3) provides the national press with the right to seek, acquire, and disseminate ideas and information freely to ensure the freedom of the press.

However, the Press Law also contains a number of potentially harmful restrictions on content which may be open to abuse. Article 5 of the law constrains the national press to report events and opinions with respect to the religious and moral norms of the public, in accordance with the presumption of innocence. This places restrictions on forms of expression such as legitimate criticisms of religious bodies, which contradicts the stipulation in Article 6 that provides that the national press plays its role in fulfilling the public's right to know, and in providing criticism, correction and suggestion towards public concerns.

Access to information

Public Information Openness Law No 14 of 2008

The 2008 Law on Public Information Openness[74] guarantees freedom of information as a right for Public Information Requesters, restricted only to Indonesian citizens or legal entities. Under Articles 22 and 35, requests for information require that the name, address and reason for the request be provided by requesters. Problematically, the law would enable the

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[71] ADY. (2014, March 14). UU Ormas Mulai Memakan Korban. Hukumonline.com. https://www.hukumonline.com/berita/a/uu-ormas-mulai-memakan-korban-lt5321da472379e

[72] Supreme Court upholds disbandment of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia. (2019, February 15). The Jakarta Post. https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2019/02/15/supreme-court-upholds-disbandment-of-hizbut-tahrir-indonesia.html

[73] Undang-undang No 40 Tahun 1990 tentang Pers, (1999). https://peraturan.bpk.go.id/Home/Details/45370/uu-no-40-tahun-1999

[74] Undang-Undang Nomor 14 Tahun 2008 tentang Keterbukaan Informasi Publik, (2008). https://jdih.kominfo.go.id/produk_hukum/view/id/172/t/undangundang+nomor+14+tahun++2008+tanggal+30+april+2008

possibility of sanitization of requested documents, allowing for the redaction or "blackening" of restricted information while providing access to the rest of the document.[75]

Under the law, criminal sanctions are provided for public officials found to deliberately disregard their obligation to provide and publish public information. However, under Article 51, harsh penalties are also prescribed for any person found to have committed deliberate use of public information "in an unlawful manner", with violators being liable to imprisonment of up to one year, and a maximum fine of five million rupiah. What is considered to be "against the law" is vaguely defined, and leaves such provisions open to abuse.

Although provisions exist to guarantee the right to freedom of information, implementation remains flawed: A 2012 study revealed structural inefficiencies in the way requests for information were handled by public bodies in Indonesia.[76] Only 46 per cent of 224 information requests had been granted, and participants frequently reported that their requests had been ignored or lost by public authorities.

State Intelligence Law No 17 of 2011

The law authorises the Indonesian State Intelligence Agency (BIN or Badan Intelijen Nasional) to conduct expansive intelligence gathering efforts against "opponents" deemed to be "harmful to national interests and security". Additionally, Article 31 of the law authorises the State Intelligence Agency to intercept communications without the need for prior court approval. The broad and ambiguous language behind "opponents" and "national interests and security" opens up the legislation to criminalization.

Article 25(4) and 25(5) stipulates that "intelligence secrets" ("*rahasia intelijen*") through which BIN operates as closed information and cannot be disclosed unless for the purpose of a trial. Thus, as Article 44 penalises individuals for the dissemination of "intelligence secrets" with imprisonment of up to 10 years, and a maximum fine of 500 million rupiah, the law allows for no transparency to "intelligence secrets" and State Intelligence Agency past operations on which it is based.

Privacy

Personal Data Protection Law No 27 of 2022

Article 28g(1) of the Indonesian Constitution provides for the rights to "protection" and the right to "feel secure". Indonesia did not have specific laws governing the right to privacy until September 2022 with the passing of the national Personal Data Protection Law No 27 of 2022.[77] The law provides for a comprehensive legal framework that covers different categories of personal data, the right of the personal data subject, obligations of personal

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[75] ARTICLE 19. (2015). Country Report: The Right to Information in Indonesia. https://www.article19.org/resources/country-report-the-right-to-information-in-indonesia/

[76] Toby. (2012, April 10). Indonesia: Large RTI Requesting Exercise Leads to Key Recommendations. Centre for Law and Democracy. https://www.law-democracy.org/live/indonesia-large-rti-requesting-exercise-leads-to-key-recommendations/

[77] Undang-undang tentang Pelindungan Data Pribadi, (2022). https://peraturan.bpk.go.id/Home/Details/229798/uu-no-27-tahun-2022

data controllers, breaches of personal data, personal data protection authority, and prohibited uses of personal data.

Most Indonesian financial services are governed by another regulatory framework under the Financial Services Authority (OJK or *Otoritas Jasa Keuangan*), including matters related to data protection. However, not all financial services come under the purview of OJK including unlicensed online lending services. The 2022 Personal Data Protection Law applies not only to entities based in Indonesia but also to those who process the personal data of Indonesian citizens or that have legal consequences in Indonesia. It is, however, not applicable to personal data processing related to national security, law enforcement, and public interests by the state.

Right to be Forgotten (2016 Amendment to the ITE Law)

A provision was added to Article 26 of the 2016 Amendment of the Electronic Information and Transactions (ITE) Law regulating that Electronic System Operators (a) provide a mechanism to remove irrelevant information or electronic data and that they (b) remove all electronic information or electronic records under their control according to a court order at the initiation of a relevant person. Though this seems to provide individuals with an element of privacy protection, the amendment lacks specifics on the circumstances in which electronic information may be deemed 'irrelevant', nor the criteria to be considered a 'relevant person'.[78]

Concerns have been raised over the potential for misuse in a statement by the Secretary General of the Alliance of Independent Journalists, which argues that the provision could be a potential threat to press freedom, as "anyone may request a court order with impunity to erase negative news concerning them in digital media".[79]

Censorship and surveillance

Pornography Law No 44 of 2008

The 2008 law on pornography prohibits the creation, dissemination, or consumption of pornographic material.[80] The law presents a loose definition of what constitutes pornography, to the point of criminalizing actions such as the kissing of lips in public, the display of sensual parts of the body (defined in Article 4 as the genitals, buttocks, hips, thighs, navel and female breasts), or any form of art and cultural expression perceived to be explicit. Section 4:1a of the law explicitly prohibits the action of or any writing/audio-visual presentation of sexual activities involving same-sex relations. The law is routinely used to censor LGBTQ+ content on the internet.

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[78] Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 19 Tahun 2016 tentang Perubahan Atas Undang-Undang Nomor 11 Tahun 2008 Tentang Informasi dan Transaksi Elektronik, (2016). https://jdih.kominfo.go.id/produk_hukum/view/id/555/t/undangundang+nomor+19+tahun+2016+tanggal+25+november+2016

[79] Varagur, K. (2016, November 7). Indonesia Poised to Pass Asia's First "Right to Be Forgotten" Law. VOA. https://www.voanews.com/a/indonesia-poised-to-pass-asia-first-right-to-be-forgotten-law/3584318.html

[80] Undang-undang No 44 Tahun 2008 tentang Pornografi, (2008). https://peraturan.bpk.go.id/Home/Details/39740

Article 40 of the Electronic Information and Transactions (ITE) Law No 11 of 2008

Article 40 of the ITE broadly dictates that the government protect the public interest from any misuse of Electronic Information and Transactions deemed as threats against the public interest and which could offend public order.[81]

The 2016 amendment widens the authority of the government with the addition of 2 sub-paragraphs under Article 40 stipulating that the government is authorized to take preventative actions against the dissemination of electronic information and documents containing content violating applicable laws, such as hate speech, defamatory material, or immoral content. The amendment enhances the scope of the government in monitoring electronic information, authorising them to terminate access to content deemed to fall under such criteria.

Handling of Internet Sites Containing Negative Content Ministerial Regulation No 19 of 2014

In July 2014, Regulation of the Minister of Communications and Informatics Number 19 of 2014 on the Handling of Negative Internet Sites came into force as part of the regulator's programme for Healthy and Safe Internet (INSAN or Internet Sehat dan Aman).

The law mandated ISPs to block any internet content that is deemed to carry "negative" elements such as pornography, hoaxes, or SARA conflicts. As the primary internet regulator, the ministry maintained a database of blocked sites known as TrustPositif which ISPs must check against to implement internet censorship. The regulation drew criticism from civil society organisations for its potential abuse.[82]

Private Electronic System Operators (PSE) Ministerial Regulation No 5 of 2020

The law came into effect in November 2020 to replace and consolidate Kominfo Regulations No 19 of 2014 on Handling of Internet Sites Containing Negative Content and No 36 of 2014 on Registration of Electronic System Operators.[83] The law requires private electronic system operators (*penyelenggara sistem elektronik* or PSE) to register themselves with Kominfo before providing any service to internet users.

Through the single registration system, a PSE must disclose how their system works and the kinds of user information they collect, store, and process. The law does not only apply to

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[81] Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 19 Tahun 2016 tentang Perubahan Atas Undang-Undang Nomor 11 Tahun 2008 Tentang Informasi dan Transaksi Elektronik, (2016). https://jdih.kominfo.go.id/produk_hukum/view/id/555/t/undangundang+nomor+19+tahun+2016+tanggal+25+november+2016

[82] Wiwoho, L. H. (2014, August 11). Masyarakat Tolak Peraturan Menkominfo tentang Blokir Situs. Kompas. https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2014/08/11/15420961/Masyarakat.Tolak.Peraturan.Menkominfo.tentang.Blokir.Situs

[83] Peraturan Menteri Komunikasi dan Informatika Nomor 5 Tahun 2020 tentang Penyelenggara Sistem Elektronik Lingkup Privat, (2020). https://jdih.kominfo.go.id/produk_hukum/view/id/759/t/peraturan+menteri+komunikasi+dan+informatika+nomor+5+tahun+2020

domestic operators but also to foreign private PSEs that have users in Indonesia. Failing registration, Kominfo would block the websites of private PSEs in Indonesia.[84]

This law shifts the regulatory burden to PSEs who would now have to make sure that their systems do not contain prohibited electronic content or facilitate the dissemination of prohibited content. These responsibilities also extend to platforms that host user-generated content such as web-hosting providers and cloud computing operators who are PSEs in their own right. According to internal documents to industry players,[85] the regulator is planning to introduce fines of up to $33,000 on PSEs for failure to take down prohibited content under this regime.

A PSE must take down prohibited content within 24 hours – or 4 hours in the cases of terrorism, pornography, or other violation of laws – of warning from Kominfo failing which the regulator has the authority to instruct ISPs to block user access to the PSE. Under this law, Kominfo or any relevant government agency may compel a PSE to provide access to its system for supervision and law enforcement purposes.

Advocates for internet freedom raised concerns over encroachment on online freedom of expression and opinion.[86] The definition of prohibited content as anything that may cause anxiety in society ("*meresahkan masyarakat*") and disturbs public order ("*mengganggu ketertiban umum*") is too broad and may be used to curtail dissenting voices. Many activists are also concerned that state apparatus may abuse their supervision and law enforcement powers under the law to target human rights defenders, especially those championing the rights of women, LGBTQ+ persons, and ethnic and religious minorities. The law, many activists argued, is inconsistent with the Indonesian constitution and the country's international human rights obligations.[87]

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[84] Muthiariny, D. E. (2022, June 28). Indonesia to Block Netflix, Google, and Twitter If They Miss Registration. Tempo. https://en.tempo.co/read/1606310/indonesia-to-block-netflix-google-and-twitter-if-they-miss-registration

[85] Timmerman, A. (2022, August 16). Indonesia will enforce laws on content moderation with tight response time and harsh fines, documents show. Rest of World. https://restofworld.org/2022/indonesia-social-media-regulations/

[86] Southeast Asia Freeedom of Expression Network. (2022, June 24). Stop Registrasi PSE Lingkup Privat dan Tarik Kembali Permenkominfo yang Mengancam Kebebasan Berekspresi dan Hak Atas Privasi Pengguna. SAFEnet. https://safenet.or.id/id/2022/06/siaran-pers-stop-registrasi-pse-lingkup-privat-dan-tarik-kembali-permenkominfo-yang-mengancam-kebebasan-berekspresi-dan-hak-atas-privasi-pengguna/

[87] Access Now, ARTICLE 19, Asia Democracy Network (ADN), Cambodia Center for Human Rights, Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF), Manushya Foundation, Open Net Korea, Southeast Asia Freedom of Expression Network (SAFEnet), The William Gomes Podcast UK, & The Kenya Human Rights Commission. (2022, July 4). Indonesia: Regulations will severely impede internet freedom. ARTICLE 19. https://www.article19.org/resources/indonesia-regulations-impede-internet-freedom/

Cases of internet censorship

TrustPositif by Kominfo

As of September 2022, the Indonesian Ministry of Information and Communication (Kominfo) has blocked over 1,000,000 websites through TrustPositif,[88] a filtering application that has been operational since 2010 per Ministerial Regulation No 19 of 2014. The majority of the blocked websites fall under the categories of gambling and pornography. Other categories of blocked websites include online scams, intellectual property violations, and "negative content" recommended by related-sector agencies. There have been reported cases of newly registered domain names being falsely pre-blocked on TrustPositif.[89] An official from Kominfo claims that the blocks are based on citizen reports.[90]

LGBTQ+ apps take down requests

Kominfo requested Google to remove 73 apps related to LGBTQ+ communities from its Indonesian PlayStore.[91] The apps identified are primarily instant messaging, online dating, and social networking apps dedicated to LGBTQ+ communities. While singling out Blued, the ministry confirmed having blocked the use of the gay social network app but it was circumvented via a different DNS configuration.

"Hoax" take down requests

Kominfo boasted that it has taken down over 565,000 "hoax content" circulated on social media in 2021, claiming that most of them are related to Covid-19 hoaxes.[92] They also claimed to having blocked "hoax websites" and requested big tech companies to delist and suspend links and accounts on their platforms.[93]

However, "hoax"—a broad label to designate all kinds of misinformation and disinformation—has been increasingly used to delegitimize political opponents, arrest critics, and justify internet shutdown.[94] The government throttled and shut down internet in West

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[88] Direktorat Jenderal Aplikasi Informatika Kementerian Komunikasi dan Informatika RI. (2022). Statistik. TrustPositif. https://trustpositif.kominfo.go.id/Statistik

[89] Domain Baru Sudah Kena Internet Positif? (2022). Diskusi Web Hosting. https://www.diskusiwebhosting.com/search/101526/?q=trustpositif&o=date

[90] Pramisti, N. Q. (2018, March 16). Aksi Blokir Situs Oleh Pemerintah, Bermanfaatkah? Tirto.id. https://tirto.id/aksi-blokir-situs-oleh-pemerintah-bermanfaatkah-cGf7

[91] Setyowati, D. (2018, January 22). Kominfo Minta Google Cabut 73 Aplikasi LGBT dari Play Store. Katadata Green. https://katadata.co.id/pingitaria/digital/5e9a560a9f6fa/kominfo-minta-google-cabut-73-aplikasi-lgbt-dari-play-store

[92] Rizkinaswara, L. (2022, 3 January). Kominfo Blokir 565.449 Konten Hoaks di Medsos Sepanjang 2021. Direktorat Jenderal Aplikasi Informatika. https://aptika.kominfo.go.id/2022/01/kominfo-blokir-565-449-konten-hoaks-di-medsos-sepanjang-2021/

[93] Timmerman, op. cit.

[94] Tapsell, R. (2019). Indonesia's Policing of Hoax News Increasingly Politicised. ISEAS Perspective, 2019(75), 1–10 https://www.iseas.edu.sg/articles-commentaries/iseas-perspective/201975-indonesias-policing-of-hoax-news-increasingly-politicised-by-ross-tapsell/

Papua in 2019 as the region was deemed to be "rife with hoaxes".[95] Activists protesting against the Omnibus Law in 2020 were arrested for "spreading hoaxes" because they shared an earlier draft of the law.[96] As a measure to appear to be the legitimate fact-checker, Kominfo regularly attempts to verify and labels content it deems misinformation as "hoax",[97] to the point of labelling a meme of adult entertainer Ricardo Milos depicted in the uniform of the ruling Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) as a hoax.[98]

Extraterritorial internet censorship

In June 2022, Kominfo warned that big tech platforms like Google, Facebook, Twitter, and others may be blocked for not registering themselves as private PSEs per Ministerial Regulation No 5 of 2020.[99] Paypal, Yahoo, Epic Games, and Steam were among the sites blocked by the regulator for failing to complete their private PSE registration before the July 2022 cutoff.[100] As of August 2022, more than 289 foreign private PSEs were registered with Kominfo and a few of these PSEs have been suspended for illegal gambling activities.[101]

Blasphemy law and internet censorship

In March 2022, ex-Muslim YouTube preacher Saifuddin Ibrahim (also known as Abraham Ben Moses) became a target of blasphemy law for his provocative and critical views on Islamic teachings and practices.[102] Following an investigation, the Indonesian police coordinated with Kominfo to remove Saifuddin Ibrahim's YouTube channels according to

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[95] Thea, Ady. (2020, 9 June). Media Dituding Sebar Berita Hoax Putusan Pembatasan Internet, Ini Klarifikasi LBH Pers. Hukum Online. https://www.hukumonline.com/berita/a/media-dituding-sebar-berita-hoax-putusan-pembatasan-internet--ini-klarifikasi-lbh-pers-lt5edf460dd6361

[96] Sastramidjaja, Y. & Rasidi, P. P. (2019). The Hashtag Battle over Indonesia's Omnibus Law: From Digital Resistance to Cyber-Control. ISEAS Perspective, 2021(95), 1–15 https://www.iseas.edu.sg/articles-commentaries/iseas-perspective/2021-95-the-hashtag-battle-over-indonesias-omnibus-law-from-digital-resistance-to-cyber-control-by-yatun-sastramidjaja-and-pradipa-p-rasidi/

[97] Hoax News Reports. (2020). Ministry of Communication and Information Technology Republic of Indonesia. https://www.kominfo.go.id/content/all/laporan_isu_hoaks

[98] [HOAKS] Ricardo Milos Berseragam PDIP Sumbang Rp 69 Miliar untuk Tangani Covid-19. (2022, July 21). Kementerian Komunikasi dan Informasi Republik Indonesia. https://www.kominfo.go.id/content/detail/28006/hoaks-ricardo-milos-berseragam-pdip-sumbang-rp-69-miliar-untuk-tangani-covid-19/0/laporan_isu_hoaks

[99] Putri, D. L. (2022, June 24). Pemerintah Ancam Blokir Google, Facebook, WhatsApp dkk, Alasannya Apa? Halaman all. Kompas. https://www.kompas.com/tren/read/2022/06/24/123000765/pemerintah-ancam-blokir-google-facebook-whatsapp-dkk-alasannya-apa-?page=all

[100] Sharwood, S. (2022, August 1). Indonesia blocks PayPal, gaming sites, for late paperwork. The Register. https://www.theregister.com/2022/08/01/indonesia_blocks_sites_pse_noncompliance/

[101] Yudha, T. (2022, August 3). Update Terbaru PSE, Ada yang Diblokir Ada yang Dinormalisasi. SINDOnews.com. https://tekno.sindonews.com/read/845513/207/update-terbaru-pse-ada-yang-diblokir-ada-yang-dinormalisasi-1659528480

[102] Pramana, R. A. (2022, March 30). Saifuddin Ibrahim Officially Becomes A Blasphemy Suspect, Butut Asks To Delete 300 Al-Quran Verses. VOI English. https://voi.id/en/news/151417/saifuddin-ibrahim-officially-becomes-a-blasphemy-suspect-butut-asks-to-delete-300-al-quran-verses

news reports.[103,104] However, as of April 2022, both YouTube channels belonging to the US-based preacher are still not blocked in Indonesia.

In April 2022, the youth wing of the moderate Muslim group Nahdlatul Ulama, Gerakan Pemuda Ansor, reported a Facebook account named Husain to the police accusing the account of promoting heresy ("*ajaran sesat*").[105] The police proceeded to investigate the account and hunted down the person behind the account. There is no further news report on the case, but citizens filing a report to the police for the accusation of blasphemy or heresy, along with requests for accounts and websites to be taken down, is a common occurrence. Such was the case with Joseph Paul Zhang in 2021 who claimed to be a prophet,[106] leader of Kelompok Doa Hati Kudus Allah Kerahiman Ilahi who was accused in 2019 of claiming to be equal to Jesus,[107] land-rights Gafatar Movement who was accused in 2016 of being syncretic,[108] and the well-known case of Salamullah religion led by Lia Eden,[109] who was arrested in 2008.

Anti-Pancasila and internet censorship

In June 2022, the Indonesian police arrested the leaders of the spiritual organisation Khilafatul Muslimin and disbanded the organisation,[110] based on the accusation that the organisation is acting against Pancasila. The arrest was supported by the state's anti-terrorism agency.[111] The website and YouTube channel of Khilafatul Muslimin have been shut down following the arrest. Critics have noted that the government confused the

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[103] Polri Gandeng Kominfo untuk Blokir Youtube Saifuddin Ibrahim. (2022, April 1). Kompas. https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2022/04/01/14310081/polri-gandeng-kominfo-untuk-blokir-youtube-saifuddin-ibrahim

[104] Ramadhan, A. B. (2022, April 1). Polri Koordinasi ke Kominfo untuk Blokir YouTube Pendeta Saifuddin Ibrahim. Detik. https://news.detik.com/berita/d-6011447/polri-koordinasi-ke-kominfo-untuk-blokir-youtube-pendeta-saifuddin-ibrahim

[105] Husdinariyanto, N. (2022, April 11). Unggah video ajaran sesat, GP Ansor Situbondo polisikan akun anonim facebook "Husain." Antara. https://jatim.antaranews.com/berita/592585/unggah-video-ajaran-sesat-gp-ansor-situbondo-polisikan-akun-anonim-facebook-husain

[106] Office of International Religious Freedom. (2022). 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: Indonesia. In U.S. Department of State. https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-report-on-international-religious-freedom/indonesia/

[107] Pengikut Kelompok Aliran Sesat Merupakan ASN dan Mantan Pejabat di Papua. (2019, August 3). Kompas. https://regional.kompas.com/read/2019/08/03/15380581/pengikut-kelompok-aliran-sesat-merupakan-asn-dan-mantan-pejabat-di-papua

[108] Linggasari, Y. (2016, January 13). Seluruh Situs Gafatar Tak Bisa Lagi Diakses. CNN Indonesia. https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20160113095659-12-103920/seluruh-situs-gafatar-tak-bisa-lagi-diakses

[109] Makin, A. (2018). Challenging Islamic Orthodoxy: Accounts of Lia Eden and Other Prophets in Indonesia (pp. 25–46). Springer.

[110] Rachman, A. (2022, June 8). Pakar Terorisme Ungkap Bukti Pemahaman Khilafatul Muslimin Tak Berbahaya. Tempo. https://metro.tempo.co/read/1599724/pakar-terorisme-ungkap-bukti-pemahaman-khilafatul-muslimin-tak-berbahaya

[111] Respons Khilafatul Muslimin, BNPT Dorong Aturan Larang Paham Radikal. (2022, June 2). CNN Indonesia. https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20220602094212-12-803776/respons-khilafatul-muslimin-bnpt-dorong-aturan-larang-paham-radikal

inward-looking spiritual movement with a political organisation due to the organisation bearing the name caliphate (*khilafah*).

This effort is a part of the re-emergence of Pancasila doctrine as the government's guiding policies to deter opposition, dubbed by some scholars as Indonesia's authoritarian turn.[112] Since the disbandment of the Islamist organization Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia following the Jakarta election in 2017, the central government has been actively cracking down on organizations deemed as "radicals" and "treasonous".[113] This includes the realignment of the independent Anti-corruption Commission (KPK or *Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi*) and firing of its personnel in 2019, as it was accused of being infested by Taliban. With support from one of the largest moderate Islam organisation Nahdlatul Ulama,[114] the government treads between the fine line of fighting extremism and hypernationalist censorship.

Examining internet censorship in Indonesia

Findings

Blocked websites

Multiple websites were found to be blocked in Indonesia as part of this study. Analysis of network measurement data collected through OONI Probe Web Connectivity tests of 2,474 websites performed across 62 ISPs, we found that Indonesian ISPs served block pages for 414 websites primarily through DNS hijacking (95% of websites tested). Most measurements of these blocked websites presented anomalies as part of the testing, which may need to be investigated further.

The blocked sites fall under various categories including pornography, gambling, anonymization and circumvention tools, LGBTQ+, provocative attire, news media, religion, gaming, human rights issues, file and media sharing, and others.

The table below illustrates the distribution of websites that were confirmed to be blocked in Indonesia by category as part of this study from 1 January 2022 to 30 June 2022.

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[112] Power, T. P. (2018). Jokowi's Authoritarian Turn and Indonesia's Democratic Decline. Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies, 54(3), 307–338. https://doi.org/10.1080/00074918.2018.1549918
[113] Citra, D. & Rasidi, P. P. (2022). In the Name of Religious Harmony: Challenges in Advancing Religious Freedom in Digital Indonesia. EngageMedia. https://engagemedia.org/projects/research-religious-freedom-indonesia/
[114] Daftar Media Islam Radikal (Salafi-Wahabi) Versi Siber NU. (2019, August 18). PC NU Kota Blitar. https://nublitar.or.id/daftar-media-islam-radikal-salafi-wahabi-versi-siber-nu/
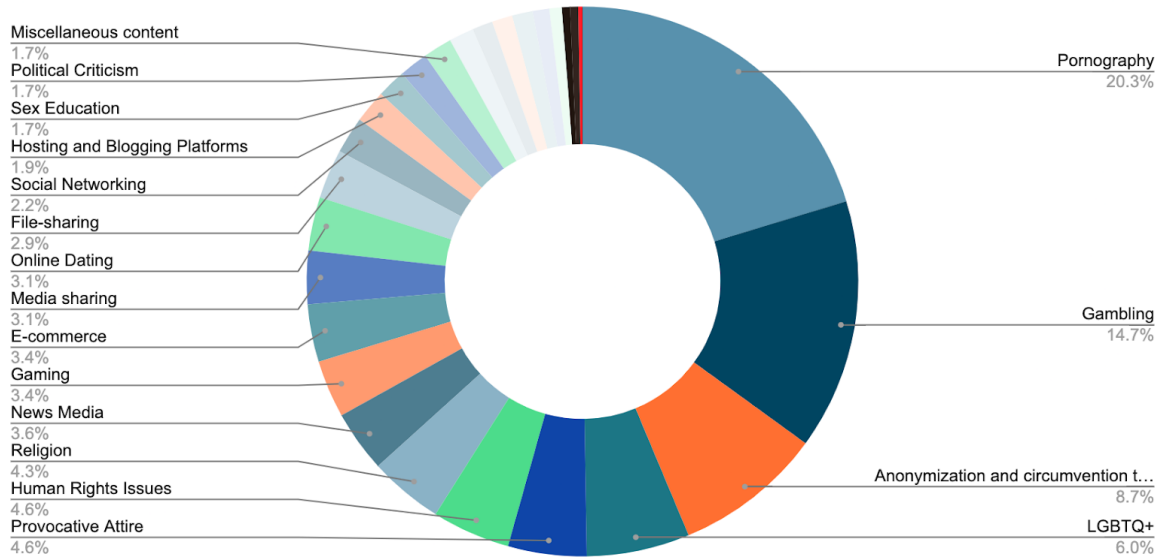
Category		Blocked Websites	OONI Probe Measurements	OONI Probe Confirmed Blocks	Block Rate
PORN	Pornography	84	6,692	3,883	58.02%
GMB	Gambling	61	6,276	2,771	44.15%
ANON	Anonymization and circumvention tools	36	6,926	436	6.30%
LGBT	LGBTQ+	25	3,921	2,280	58.15%
PROV	Provocative Attire	19	2,284	1,282	56.13%
HUMR	Human Rights Issues	19	3,357	1,498	44.62%
REL	Religion	18	3,092	1,440	46.57%
NEWS	News Media	15	3,164	978	30.91%
GAME	Gaming	14	584	332	56.85%
COMM	E-commerce	14	1,102	352	31.94%
MMED	Media sharing	13	2,630	1,419	53.95%
DATE	Online Dating	13	1,602	746	46.57%
FILE	File-sharing	12	1,352	468	34.62%
GRP	Social Networking	9	1,875	751	40.05%
HOST	Hosting and Blogging Platforms	8	1,246	374	30.02%
XED	Sex Education	7	1,044	495	47.41%

Category		Blocked Websites	OONI Probe Measurements	OONI Probe Confirmed Blocks	Block Rate
POLR	Political Criticism	7	1,549	570	36.80%
MISC	Miscellaneous content	7	132	7	5.30%
CULTR	Culture	6	669	302	45.14%
PUBH	Public Health	5	572	258	45.10%
HATE	Hate Speech	5	498	197	39.56%
ALDR	Alcohol & Drugs	5	599	228	38.06%
HACK	Hacking Tools	4	231	1	0.43%
ENV	Environment	3	447	98	21.92%
COMT	Communication Tools	2	206	93	45.15%
MILX	Terrorism and Militants	2	192	6	3.13%
GOVT	Government	1	15	0	0.00%
Aggregate		**414**	**52,257**	**21,265**	**40.69%**

Pornography

84 pornography websites were found to be blocked during the testing period of 1 January 2022 until 30 June 2022. 75 of these websites were confirmed through OONI Probe while 9 were confirmed through heuristic analysis. The measurements include websites that were miscategorised as LGBTQ+ (www.bglad.com and www.gayscape.com) and as news media (pornhub.com and xvideos.com) in the test list.

Websites	Measured	Blocked	Not Blocked	Anomalous	Failed
www.bglad.com	207	127 (61.35%)	7 (3.38%)	30 (14.49%)	43 (20.77%)
www.gayscape.com	206	127 (61.65%)	9 (4.37%)	27 (13.11%)	43 (20.87%)
www.pornhub.com	145	80 (55.17%)	6 (4.14%)	31 (21.38%)	28 (19.31%)
alt.com	130	84 (64.62%)	6 (4.62%)	22 (16.92%)	18 (13.85%)
beeg.com	128	81 (63.28%)	4 (3.13%)	25 (19.53%)	18 (14.06%)
www.xvideos.com	125	76 (60.8%)	3 (2.4%)	12 (9.6%)	34 (27.2%)
www.purextc.com	121	72 (59.5%)	5 (4.13%)	23 (19.01%)	21 (17.36%)
hotgaylist.com	121	70 (57.85%)	8 (6.61%)	19 (15.7%)	24 (19.83%)
www.sex.com	121	70 (57.85%)	4 (3.31%)	18 (14.88%)	29 (23.97%)

Websites	Measured	Blocked	Not Blocked	Anomalous	Failed
www.bglad.com	207	127 (61.35%)	7 (3.38%)	30 (14.49%)	43 (20.77%)
www.wetplace.com	120	72 (60%)	3 (2.5%)	34 (28.33%)	11 (9.17%)
www.livejasmin.com	120	69 (57.5%)	3 (2.5%)	24 (20%)	24 (20%)
milfhunter.com	120	74 (61.67%)	4 (3.33%)	22 (18.33%)	20 (16.67%)
www.playboy.com	120	70 (58.33%)	4 (3.33%)	22 (18.33%)	24 (20%)
realdoll.com	120	78 (65%)	4 (3.33%)	18 (15%)	20 (16.67%)
xhamster.com	120	73 (60.83%)	6 (5%)	18 (15%)	23 (19.17%)
www.freegaypornfinder.com	120	73 (60.83%)	3 (2.5%)	13 (10.83%)	31 (25.83%)
youjizz.com	120	71 (59.17%)	2 (1.67%)	13 (10.83%)	34 (28.33%)
hardsextube.com	119	70 (58.82%)	7 (5.88%)	41 (34.45%)	1 (0.84%)
www.nurumassage.net	119	67 (56.3%)	4 (3.36%)	23 (19.33%)	25 (21.01%)
www.tubev.sex	119	67 (56.3%)	6 (5.04%)	22 (18.49%)	24 (20.17%)

A sample of pornography websites blocked in Indonesia

Gambling

61 gambling websites found to be blocked during the testing period of 1 January 2022 until 30 June 2022. All except five websites were confirmed through OONI Probe. The five websites could only be confirmed blocked through heuristics.

Websites	Measured	Blocked	Not Blocked	Anomalous	Failed
198.96.92.14	123	1 (0.81%)	0 (0%)	7 (5.69%)	115 (93.5%)
88bola.com	122	78 (63.93%)	5 (4.1%)	16 (13.11%)	23 (18.85%)
bolazoom.com	122	73 (59.84%)	9 (7.38%)	5 (4.1%)	35 (28.69%)
www.slotland.com	121	73 (60.33%)	4 (3.31%)	19 (15.7%)	25 (20.66%)
indolucky7.com	121	74 (61.16%)	9 (7.44%)	10 (8.26%)	28 (23.14%)
www.usacasino.com	121	19 (15.7%)	2 (1.65%)	46 (38.02%)	54 (44.63%)
fifabola.com	120	69 (57.5%)	6 (5%)	35 (29.17%)	10 (8.33%)
human-rights-for-all.org	120	67 (55.83%)	6 (5%)	19 (15.83%)	28 (23.33%)
www.gambling.com	120	68 (56.67%)	9 (7.5%)	19 (15.83%)	24 (20%)
www.poker.com	120	66 (55%)	5 (4.17%)	18 (15%)	31 (25.83%)

Websites	Measured	Blocked	Not Blocked	Anomalous	Failed
198.96.92.14	123	1 (0.81%)	0 (0%)	7 (5.69%)	115 (93.5%)
www.spinpalace.com	120	65 (54.17%)	4 (3.33%)	16 (13.33%)	35 (29.17%)
www.sportsinteraction.com	120	66 (55%)	3 (2.5%)	18 (15%)	33 (27.5%)
www.betfair.com	120	70 (58.33%)	4 (3.33%)	20 (16.67%)	26 (21.67%)
www.royalvegas.com	120	16 (13.33%)	4 (3.33%)	67 (55.83%)	33 (27.5%)
axiooqq.online	119	52 (43.7%)	13 (10.92%)	19 (15.97%)	35 (29.41%)
bolanaga.com	119	70 (58.82%)	7 (5.88%)	1 (0.84%)	41 (34.45%)
bolauntung.com	119	66 (55.46%)	7 (5.88%)	20 (16.81%)	26 (21.85%)
taruhan.org	119	67 (56.3%)	4 (3.36%)	48 (40.34%)	0 (0%)
www.onlinegambling.com	119	67 (56.3%)	4 (3.36%)	22 (18.49%)	26 (21.85%)
www.partypoker.com	119	62 (52.1%)	4 (3.36%)	26 (21.85%)	27 (22.69%)

A sample of gambling websites blocked in Indonesia

Anonymization and circumvention tools

36 websites that provide anonymization and circumvention tools were blocked in Indonesia during the testing period of 1 January 2022 until 30 June 2022. These websites are predominantly websites that provide web proxies, virtual private network services, and other tools that help internet users protect their anonymity and circumvent censorship online. All websites in this category could be confirmed blocked using OONI Probe except seven websites which were confirmed blocked through heuristics only.

Websites	Measured	Blocked	Not Blocked	Anomalous	Failed
www.xroxy.com	405	3 (0.74%)	0 (0%)	8 (1.98%)	394 (97.28%)
multiproxy.org	230	4 (1.74%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.43%)	225 (97.83%)
guardster.com	218	3 (1.38%)	2 (0.92%)	4 (1.83%)	209 (95.87%)
anonymizer.secuser.com	216	3 (1.39%)	0 (0%)	4 (1.85%)	209 (96.76%)
proxify.com	216	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6 (2.78%)	210 (97.22%)
hola.org	216	1 (0.46%)	1 (0.46%)	4 (1.85%)	210 (97.22%)
anonymouse.org	215	129 (60%)	5 (2.33%)	26 (12.09%)	55 (25.58%)
anonymousproxylist.net	214	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5 (2.34%)	209 (97.66%)
proxy.org	214	2 (0.93%)	1 (0.47%)	9 (4.21%)	202 (94.39%)

Websites	Measured	Blocked	Not Blocked	Anomalous	Failed
anonymat.org	212	3 (1.42%)	0 (0%)	3 (1.42%)	206 (97.17%)
www.allproxysites.com	211	12 (5.69%)	2 (0.95%)	102 (48.34%)	95 (45.02%)
tor.eff.org	209	1 (0.48%)	1 (0.48%)	9 (4.31%)	198 (94.74%)
securevpn.im	209	1 (0.48%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.48%)	207 (99.04%)
www.betternet.co	209	1 (0.48%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	208 (99.52%)
www.http-tunnel.com	208	2 (0.96%)	1 (0.48%)	4 (1.92%)	201 (96.63%)
www.torproject.org	208	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (1.92%)	204 (98.08%)
www.anonymsurfen.com	207	5 (2.42%)	0 (0%)	3 (1.45%)	199 (96.14%)
www.hidemyass.com	207	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (1.93%)	203 (98.07%)
www.inetprivacy.com	207	2 (0.97%)	0 (0%)	2 (0.97%)	203 (98.07%)
www.megaproxy.com	207	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5 (2.42%)	202 (97.58%)

A sample of anonymization and circumvention websites blocked in Indonesia

LGBTQ+

25 LGBTQ+ websites were confirmed blocked in Indonesia during the testing period from 1 January 2022 until 30 June 2022. They include websites of LGBTQ+ rights organisations, online forums, magazines, travel bookings, and others. All of these websites were confirmed blocked based on OONI Probe measurement data except for four websites which could only be confirmed through heuristic analysis. Three online dating sites (www.grindr.com, www.planetromeo.com, and www.scruff.com) and two pornography websites (www.bglad.com and www.gayscape.com) were miscategorised as LGBTQ+ websites in the test list.

Websites	Measured	Blocked	Not Blocked	Anomalous	Failed
ilga.org	230	137 (59.57%)	2 (0.87%)	38 (16.52%)	53 (23.04%)
gayindonesiaforum.com	216	135 (62.5%)	5 (2.31%)	25 (11.57%)	51 (23.61%)
pridesource.com	215	119 (55.35%)	2 (0.93%)	40 (18.6%)	54 (25.12%)
www.gay.com	210	133 (63.33%)	7 (3.33%)	24 (11.43%)	46 (21.9%)
transsexual.org	209	129 (61.72%)	7 (3.35%)	20 (9.57%)	53 (25.36%)
www.gayegypt.com	208	134 (64.42%)	8 (3.85%)	25 (12.02%)	41 (19.71%)
www.shoe.org	207	116 (56.04%)	7 (3.38%)	37 (17.87%)	47 (22.71%)

Websites	Measured	Blocked	Not Blocked	Anomalous	Failed
www.ifge.org	207	129 (62.32%)	8 (3.86%)	26 (12.56%)	44 (21.26%)
www.glbtq.com	206	131 (63.59%)	9 (4.37%)	32 (15.53%)	34 (16.5%)
www.glil.org	206	122 (59.22%)	9 (4.37%)	26 (12.62%)	49 (23.79%)
www.ilga-europe.org	206	105 (50.97%)	8 (3.88%)	36 (17.48%)	57 (27.67%)
www.tsroadmap.com	205	126 (61.46%)	8 (3.9%)	28 (13.66%)	43 (20.98%)
www.nifty.org	205	108 (52.68%)	7 (3.41%)	36 (17.56%)	54 (26.34%)
www.out.com	204	120 (58.82%)	7 (3.43%)	34 (16.67%)	43 (21.08%)
www.queernet.org	202	125 (61.88%)	9 (4.46%)	24 (11.88%)	44 (21.78%)
www.samesexmarriage.ca	202	127 (62.87%)	10 (4.95%)	25 (12.38%)	40 (19.8%)
www.nclrights.org	201	121 (60.2%)	9 (4.48%)	26 (12.94%)	45 (22.39%)
bisexual.org	176	107 (60.8%)	3 (1.7%)	35 (19.89%)	31 (17.61%)
www.lgbtglobalfaith.org	122	8 (6.56%)	1 (0.82%)	60 (49.18%)	53 (43.44%)
bi.org	49	24 (48.98%)	1 (2.04%)	5 (10.2%)	19 (38.78%)

A sample of LGBTQ+ websites blocked in Indonesia

News Media

15 news media websites were found to be blocked during the testing period of 1 January 2022 until 30 June 2022. 9 of these websites were confirmed through OONI Probe while 6 were confirmed through heuristic analysis.

These do not include three websites that were miscategorised as news media www.reddit.com (social networking) as well as pornhub.com and xvideos.com (pornography). Some of these sites (hariankompas.net, kabobfest.com) seem to be content farms masquerading as news outlets by taking the name of major publications (kompas.com), or gambling sites masquerading as news outlets to promote gambling.

Websites	Measured	Blocked	Not Blocked	Anomalous	Failed
crito.jw.lt	218	133 (61.01%)	5 (2.29%)	31 (14.22%)	49 (22.48%)
papuapost.com	217	142 (65.44%)	5 (2.3%)	54 (24.88%)	16 (7.37%)
opinibangsa.com	216	113 (52.31%)	4 (1.85%)	34 (15.74%)	65 (30.09%)
harianandalas.com	216	52 (24.07%)	16 (7.41%)	20 (9.26%)	128 (59.26%)
beritasore.com	215	124 (57.67%)	5 (2.33%)	30 (13.95%)	56 (26.05%)

Websites	Measured	Blocked	Not Blocked	Anomalous	Failed
hariankompas.net	215	112 (52.09%)	18 (8.37%)	12 (5.58%)	73 (33.95%)
www.balipost.co.id	208	108 (51.92%)	7 (3.37%)	39 (18.75%)	54 (25.96%)
www.warungbebas.com	202	128 (63.37%)	9 (4.46%)	24 (11.88%)	41 (20.3%)
www.kabobfest.com	186	66 (35.48%)	8 (4.3%)	24 (12.9%)	88 (47.31%)
kepri.haluan.co	217	0 (0%)	19 (8.76%)	68 (31.34%)	130 (59.91%)
www.galamedianews.com	215	0 (0%)	22 (10.23%)	68 (31.63%)	125 (58.14%)
samudranesia.id	214	0 (0%)	13 (6.07%)	2 (0.93%)	199 (92.99%)
sulawesi24.com	213	0 (0%)	17 (7.98%)	139 (65.26%)	57 (26.76%)
www.bldaily.com	209	0 (0%)	26 (12.44%)	72 (34.45%)	111 (53.11%)
www.ruf-ch.org	203	0 (0%)	11 (5.42%)	3 (1.48%)	189 (93.1%)

News media websites blocked in Indonesia

Religion

18 websites related to religion were found to be blocked in Indonesia during the testing period of 1 January 2022 until 30 June 2022. All except four websites were confirmed through OONI Probe. The four websites could only be confirmed blocked through heuristics.

Websites	Measured	Blocked	Not Blocked	Anomalous	Failed
exmuslim.wordpress.com	312	164 (52.56%)	9 (2.88%)	52 (16.67%)	87 (27.88%)
thequran.com	153	80 (52.29%)	2 (1.31%)	19 (12.42%)	52 (33.99%)
trulyislam.blogspot.com	156	90 (57.69%)	1 (0.64%)	23 (14.74%)	42 (26.92%)
www.arrahmah.com	155	72 (46.45%)	6 (3.87%)	48 (30.97%)	29 (18.71%)
www.komunitaseden.com	158	89 (56.33%)	4 (2.53%)	27 (17.09%)	38 (24.05%)
beritamuslim.wordpress.com	313	170 (54.31%)	5 (1.6%)	44 (14.06%)	94 (30.03%)
indonesia.faithfreedom.org	313	168 (53.67%)	8 (2.56%)	38 (12.14%)	99 (31.63%)
answering-islam.org	156	70 (44.87%)	6 (3.85%)	36 (23.08%)	44 (28.21%)

Websites	Measured	Blocked	Not Blocked	Anomalous	Failed
www.faithfreedom.org	155	93 (60%)	1 (0.65%)	20 (12.9%)	41 (26.45%)
www.gensyiah.com	155	91 (58.71%)	1 (0.65%)	21 (13.55%)	42 (27.1%)
www.raymondibrahim.com	159	93 (58.49%)	4 (2.52%)	20 (12.58%)	42 (26.42%)
www.submission.org	154	6 (3.9%)	1 (0.65%)	7 (4.55%)	140 (90.91%)
www.jesussaves.cc	153	0 (0%)	3 (1.96%)	15 (9.8%)	135 (88.24%)
www.murtad.xyz	155	0 (0%)	19 (12.26%)	45 (29.03%)	91 (58.71%)
islamagamasetan.blogspot.co.id	155	75 (48.39%)	6 (3.87%)	33 (21.29%)	41 (26.45%)
komiknabimuhammad.blogspot.com	156	85 (54.49%)	2 (1.28%)	19 (12.18%)	50 (32.05%)
cbst.org	1	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)
mualaf-alhamdulillah.blogspot.com	133	94 (70.68%)	1 (0.75%)	10 (7.52%)	28 (21.05%)

Websites related to religion blocked in Indonesia

Provocative Attire

19 provocative websites were found to be blocked in Indonesia during the testing period of 1 January 2022 until 30 June 2022. These websites include men's lifestyle magazines, online lingerie shops, celebrity news blogs, nudist subculture and other similar websites. All of the websites were confirmed blocked based on measurement data from OONI Probe.

Websites	Measured	Blocked	Not Blocked	Anomalous	Failed
fhm.com	239	130 (54.39%)	13 (5.44%)	42 (17.57%)	54 (22.59%)
fhm.nl	120	65 (54.17%)	6 (5%)	21 (17.5%)	28 (23.33%)
panties.com	117	68 (58.12%)	8 (6.84%)	24 (20.51%)	17 (14.53%)
trashy.com	117	71 (60.68%)	5 (4.27%)	24 (20.51%)	17 (14.53%)
www.3wishes.com	117	68 (58.12%)	8 (6.84%)	24 (20.51%)	17 (14.53%)
www.agentprovocateur.com	126	75 (59.52%)	4 (3.17%)	21 (16.67%)	26 (20.63%)
www.bodylingerie.com	117	72 (61.54%)	3 (2.56%)	17 (14.53%)	25 (21.37%)

Websites	Measured	Blocked	Not Blocked	Anomalous	Failed
www.delicates.co.uk	117	67 (57.26%)	2 (1.71%)	18 (15.38%)	30 (25.64%)
www.fotoartis.in	119	67 (56.3%)	4 (3.36%)	19 (15.97%)	29 (24.37%)
www.maxim.com	120	67 (55.83%)	4 (3.33%)	24 (20%)	25 (20.83%)
www.purenudism.net	119	69 (57.98%)	5 (4.2%)	20 (16.81%)	25 (21.01%)
www.smog.pl	118	70 (59.32%)	3 (2.54%)	13 (11.02%)	32 (27.12%)
www.trashy.com	120	72 (60%)	3 (2.5%)	14 (11.67%)	31 (25.83%)
profilselebryti.blogspot.com	120	75 (62.5%)	7 (5.83%)	17 (14.17%)	21 (17.5%)
www.chantelle.com	119	74 (62.18%)	2 (1.68%)	20 (16.81%)	23 (19.33%)
www.coquette.com	118	76 (64.41%)	2 (1.69%)	18 (15.25%)	22 (18.64%)
beritapanasselebritis.blogspot.com	122	79 (64.75%)	2 (1.64%)	20 (16.39%)	21 (17.21%)
www.lingeriebowl.com	19	13 (68.42%)	1 (5.26%)	5 (26.32%)	0 (0%)
duniamalam168.com	120	4 (3.33%)	1 (0.83%)	62 (51.67%)	53 (44.17%)

Websites related to provocative attire blocked in Indonesia

Human Rights Issues

20 websites related to human rights issues were blocked in Indonesia during the testing period of 1 January 2022 until 30 June 2022. All websites in this category could be confirmed blocked using OONI Probe except two websites which were confirmed blocked through heuristics only.

These measurements include six websites incorrectly categorised as Terrorism and Militants in the test list. These websites are not actually terrorist or militant websites but they represent leaders and groups of the West Papuan pro-independence movement.

Websites	Measured	Blocked	Not Blocked	Anomalous	Failed
guerrillagirls.com	218	135 (61.93%)	7 (3.21%)	32 (14.68%)	44 (20.18%)
infopapua.org	218	135 (61.93%)	3 (1.38%)	24 (11.01%)	56 (25.69%)
hrwg.org	217	109 (50.23%)	7 (3.23%)	36 (16.59%)	65 (29.95%)
www.guerrillagirls.com	216	116 (53.7%)	6 (2.78%)	41 (18.98%)	53 (24.54%)

Websites	Measured	Blocked	Not Blocked	Anomalous	Failed
www.freespeechcoalition.com	212	122 (57.55%)	4 (1.89%)	37 (17.45%)	49 (23.11%)
www.freespeech.org	211	117 (55.45%)	5 (2.37%)	41 (19.43%)	48 (22.75%)
www.tifafoundation.org	209	34 (16.27%)	20 (9.57%)	44 (21.05%)	111 (53.11%)
www.mampu.or.id	207	0 (0%)	20 (9.66%)	24 (11.59%)	163 (78.74%)
www.hrusa.org	207	1 (0.48%)	0 (0%)	21 (10.14%)	185 (89.37%)
www.hrcr.org	206	0 (0%)	13 (6.31%)	1 (0.49%)	192 (93.2%)
www.womenwarpeace.org	204	120 (58.82%)	7 (3.43%)	27 (13.24%)	50 (24.51%)
www.womenonwaves.org	204	3 (1.47%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.49%)	200 (98.04%)
secure.avaaz.org	167	82 (49.1%)	9 (5.39%)	27 (16.17%)	49 (29.34%)
www.ilhr.org	153	87 (56.86%)	4 (2.61%)	26 (16.99%)	36 (23.53%)
freepapua.com	124	77 (62.1%)	6 (4.84%)	21 (16.94%)	20 (16.13%)
www.freewestpapua.org	120	72 (60%)	6 (5%)	23 (19.17%)	19 (15.83%)
www.ilwp.org	118	73 (61.86%)	5 (4.24%)	17 (14.41%)	23 (19.49%)
www.ipwp.org	118	76 (64.41%)	5 (4.24%)	15 (12.71%)	22 (18.64%)
www.ulmwp.org	118	67 (56.78%)	7 (5.93%)	17 (14.41%)	27 (22.88%)
www.bennywenda.org	117	72 (61.54%)	8 (6.84%)	20 (17.09%)	17 (14.53%)

Websites related to human rights issues blocked in Indonesia

File and media sharing

25 file and media sharing websites were found to be blocked in Indonesia during the testing period of 1 January 2022 until 30 June 2022. All except three websites were confirmed through OONI Probe. The three websites could only be confirmed blocked through heuristic analysis.

Websites	Measured	Blocked	Not Blocked	Anomalous	Failed
vimeo.com	448	219 (48.88%)	18 (4.02%)	88 (19.64%)	123 (27.46%)
dramaserial.xyz	183	110 (60.11%)	4 (2.19%)	5 (2.73%)	64 (34.97%)
filmapik.club	183	112 (61.2%)	5 (2.73%)	51 (27.87%)	15 (8.2%)
premierexxi.com	183	109 (59.56%)	3 (1.64%)	52 (28.42%)	19 (10.38%)
bigolivepc.com	182	116 (63.74%)	5 (2.75%)	21 (11.54%)	40 (21.98%)

bigospace.com	182	117 (64.29%)	6 (3.3%)	22 (12.09%)	37 (20.33%)
bioskopkerenin. com	182	110 (60.44%)	5 (2.75%)	2 (1.1%)	65 (35.71%)
dewabioskop21 .org	182	114 (62.64%)	5 (2.75%)	10 (5.49%)	53 (29.12%)
filmapik.fun	181	100 (55.25%)	7 (3.87%)	34 (18.78%)	40 (22.1%)
idxx1.cam	181	94 (51.93%)	6 (3.31%)	55 (30.39%)	26 (14.36%)
juraganfilm.live	181	108 (59.67%)	10 (5.52%)	1 (0.55%)	62 (34.25%)
lk21tv.com	181	110 (60.77%)	5 (2.76%)	18 (9.94%)	48 (26.52%)
imgur.com	181	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (1.66%)	178 (98.34%)
thepiratebay.or g	143	86 (60.14%)	2 (1.4%)	20 (13.99%)	35 (24.48%)
subscene.com	139	76 (54.68%)	6 (4.32%)	13 (9.35%)	44 (31.65%)
savefrom.net	136	0 (0%)	1 (0.74%)	3 (2.21%)	132 (97.06%)
kat.sx	134	84 (62.69%)	4 (2.99%)	9 (6.72%)	37 (27.61%)
www.slsknet.or g	133	2 (1.5%)	1 (0.75%)	5 (3.76%)	125 (93.98%)
www.serials.ws	133	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (1.5%)	131 (98.5%)
www.speedtorr ent.net	131	73 (55.73%)	4 (3.05%)	22 (16.79%)	32 (24.43%)

File and media sharing websites blocked in Indonesia

Instant messaging and circumvention tools

Most measurements examining the reachability of instant messaging services (Facebook Messenger, Telegram, Signal, WhatsApp) and circumvention tools (Psiphon and Tor) did not indicate any blocking throughout the testing period. However, there is a very small number of anomalies that may need to be investigated further.

Tests	Measured	Blocked	Not Blocked	Anomalous	Failed	ISPs
Facebook Messenger	3,998	–	3,901 (97.57%)	96 (2.40%)	1 (0.03%)	57
Telegram	4,051	–	3,893 (96.10%)	15 (73.88%)	1 (0.02%)	57
Signal	3,928	–	3,765 (95.85%)	16 (24.12%)	1 (0.03%)	56
WhatsApp	4,053	–	3,963 (97.78%)	89 (2.20%)	1 (0.02%)	57
Psiphon	4,028	–	3,998 (99.26%)	29 (0.72%)	1 (0.02%)	56

Tests	Measured	Blocked	Not Blocked	Anomalous	Failed	ISPs
Facebook Messenger	3,998	–	3,901 (97.57%)	96 (2.40%)	1 (0.03%)	57
Tor	3,962	–	3,780 (95.41%)	18 (24.59%)	–	54
Tor Snowflake	137	–	118 (86.13%)	19 (13.87%)	–	29

Acknowledgement of limitations

	January	February	March	April	May	June	Aggregate
Measured	36,762	23,042	53,147	96,128	93,812	84,348	387,239
Blocked	3,118	1,643	4,023	5,198	3,786	3,503	21,271
Block Rate	8.48%	7.13%	7.57%	5.41%	4.04%	4.15%	5.49%
Hostnames	2,308	2,164	2,124	2,106	2,108	2,231	2,473
ASNs	22	21	23	35	31	23	62

Summary of OONI Probe Web Connectivity measurement data for Indonesia from 1 January until 30 Jun 2022

During the testing period from 1 January 2022 until 30 June 2022, more than 387,000 web connectivity measurements in Indonesia were collected using the OONI Probe. The distribution of measurements, however, is not consistent when compared month-to-month throughout the testing period with more than 70% collected in the second half. As a result of having significantly fewer measurements in the first half, the months of January, February, and March show a higher rate of blocking. This means that no inference can reliably be made whether internet censorship has improved or worsened in Indonesia over the six-month period.

Another limitation of this study is the number and types of websites included in the OONI Probe measurements. A total of 2,473 websites were tested during the six-month period but the number of different websites tested varies when compared month-to-month ranging from 2,106 to 2,308 websites. While the low variance indicates a good coverage of websites tested across the testing period, a number of limitations should be taken into account.

The global and country test lists contain a very small sample of URLs that may be visited by Indonesian internet users. Testing web connectivity using the test lists is thus not representative of the whole internet in Indonesia. Some URLs included in the test lists could be outdated, miscategorised, or belonged to multiple categories which may have resulted in skewed or varying interpretations of the measurement data.

These websites include those for West Papuan pro-independence movement miscategorised as terrorism as well as gambling and content farm websites masquerading as news outlets wrongly categorised as news media. Another notable example is the online adult entertainment site krucil.com. The site, currently labelled as e-commerce, sits in areas

of several categories as it provides pornography and sex education, and is also used for advertising sex work.

The measurements collected are also limited by the number of different ISPs covered. In any given month, only 21 to 35 different ISPs are included in the measurement data as compared to 65 different ISPs covered for the whole testing period. The high variance between these figures indicates less than ideal ISP coverage of the measurement data. There may be Indonesian ISPs not included in some measurements that would return confirmed blocking and thus limit the data analysis.

Despite these limitations, the measurement data from OONI Probe is useful in providing a broad indication of the general depth and breadth of internet censorship in Indonesia. Similar studies in the future may overcome some of these limitations by deploying OONI Probe on more devices, running a consistent number of tests periodically, and having wider coverage of ISPs across Indonesia.

Conclusion

As shown in the analysis of OONI Probe measurement data, the study found ample evidence of extensive internet censorship in Indonesia, especially websites relating to pornography, online gambling, anonymization and circumvention tools, and LGBTQ+ communities. Indonesia has an increasingly regimented internet censorship approach judging by how national laws and policies have changed in recent years. With the implementation of the PSE regulatory framework, the compliance burden of internet censorship is shifting from ISPs to other intermediaries including publishers, hosts, platform owners, app developers, and so on.

This approach towards regulating the internet may result in further alienation and disenfranchisement of marginalised communities including LGBTQ+ persons, religious groups, and pro-independence activists in Indonesia. Websites, apps, and other internet-based services that cater to these communities in Indonesia have to constantly reassess whether they can take on the liability of being regulated as PSEs or risk being blocked in Indonesia. With the re-emergence of Pancasila as hypernationalist political discourse, it also threatens to deter Indonesia's already flailing political opposition by deeming political critics as treasonous and, in case of critics from political Islam, masquerading censorship as combating Islamist extremism. The expansive powers granted to the authorities under current regulations raise legitimate concerns over state surveillance and other potential abuses.

The expansion of TrustPositif as a centralised web filtering system is worrying not least because it will only make internet censorship in Indonesia more effective and efficient. The Indonesian network regulator is already coordinating with other non-state internet governing bodies like APJII and PANDI – the Indonesian domain name registry – to extend the use of TrustPositif. In promoting INSAN ("healthy and safe internet"), the regulator, ISPs, and other stakeholders must exercise considerable restraint so that any restriction does not infringe on the right to freedom of expression and opinion. If advocates are not vigilant about the creeping encroachment on online freedom of expression and opinion, Indonesia will move a

step closer to having its own Great Firewall like China.[115] The standard for what is "healthy" and "safe" on the internet should always be challenged and tested against normative human rights principles of legality, necessity, and proportionality.[116]

[115] Welirang, A. (2022, August 8). Pemblokiran PSE dan Hal-hal yang Melampauinya. Serunai. https://serunai.co/2022/08/08/pemblokiran-pse-dan-hal-hal-yang-melampauinya/
[116] Policy Recommendations: Internet Freedom. (2022). Freedom House. https://freedomhouse.org/policy-recommendations/internet-freedom

Annex ID-1: Probed ISPs

Probed ISPs: Biznet Networks (AS17451), CV Natanetwork Solution (AS138131), Hutchison CP Telecommunications, PT (AS45727), IAIN Walisongo Semarang (AS132638), Indosat Internet Network Provider (AS4761), Kementerian Riset dan Teknologi Badan Riset dan Inovasi Nasional (AS139968), Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia - LIPI (AS45292), Linknet-Fastnet ASN (AS23700), Lintas Data Prima, PT (AS45305), Neuviz Net (AS18103), PT Asia Teknologi Solusi (AS56233), PT Bali Towerindo Sentra, Tbk (AS136119), PT Biznet Gio Nusantara (AS133800), PT Centrin Utama (AS9326), PT Citra Jelajah Informatika (AS131717), PT Cloud Hosting Indonesia (AS136052), PT Global Data Akses Persada (AS142368), PT Green Net Indonesia (AS138873), PT iForte Global Internet (AS17995), PT Ikhlas Cipta Teknologi (AS140457), PT Indonesia Comnets Plus (AS9341), PT Inovasi Global Mumpuni (AS55664), PT Jala Lintas Media (AS55685), PT Jaringan VNT Indonesia (AS59278), PT Jaringanku Sarana Nusantara (AS64300), PT Jembatan Citra Nusantara (AS23951), PT Media Sarana Data (AS55666), PT Mega Data Akses (AS142369), PT Mitra Lintas Multimedia (AS136093), PT Mora Telematika Indonesia (AS131111), PT Parsaoran Global Datatrans (AS58495), PT Quantum Tera Network (AS46023), PT Remala Abadi (AS38511), PT Shangkuriang Telekomunikasi Indonesia (AS137310), PT Solnet Indonesia (AS9422), PT Telekomunikasi Indonesia (AS7713), PT Telekomunikasi Indonesia (AS17974), PT Wireless Indonesia Win (AS18004), PT XL Axiata (AS24203), PT XL Axiata Tbk (AS17885), PT XL Axiata Tbk (AS139994), PT Adeaksa Indo Jayatama (AS138123), PT Artha Lintas Data Mandiri (AS137329), PT Cemerlang Multimedia (AS55699), PT Cipta Informatika Cemerlang (AS45295), PT Cyberindo Aditama (AS135478), PT Eka Mas Republik (AS63859), PT Fiber Networks Indonesia (AS58369), PT Hipernet Indodata (AS38758), PT Jinom Network Indonesia (AS138064), PT Jupiter Jala Arta (AS131775), PT Mahameru Media Nusantara (AS138100), PT MNC Kabel Mediacom (AS17670), PT Smartfren Telecom, Tbk (AS133798), PT Telekomunikasi Selular (AS23693), PT Total Info Kharisma (AS9228), PT Transhybrid Communication (AS24534), PT Wanriau Indoxp (AS45294), PT Yasmin Amanah Media (AS139967), Varnion Technology Semesta, PT (AS45287), M247 (AS9009), and Zenlayer Inc (AS21859).

iMAP State of Internet Censorship Report 2022

COUNTRY: MALAYSIA

By Kelly Koh (Sinar Project) and Siti Nurliza Samsudin (Sinar Project)

Key Findings

- The Ministry of Communications and Multimedia (MCMC) do not publish list of blocked sites, however statements were released from time to time to announce the number of sites blocked. It was revealed that 2,195 websites promoting online gambling were blocked as of March 2021.[117] Between 2020 to July 2021, 960 phishing sites were blocked.[118] From 2018 to September 2021, 4,068 pornography sites were blocked by MCMC.[119]
- A total of a total of 75 sites were found to face instances of blocking from January to June 2022, ranging from pornography, political criticism, gambling, LGBT, file sharing, news media, religion, culture, media sharing, online dating, e-commerce, gaming, hosting and blogging platform, and human rights issues sites.
- The main method used to implement censorship is by way of DNS tampering.
- The main categories of sites being blocked are pornography, political criticism, gambling, LGBT sites.
- NFT site monyetistana.com featuring a cartoon monkey in royal suit is found to be blocked, as it was alleged to be insulting to the monarchy.
- Official website of the Coalition for Clean and Fair Election, bersih.org was found to be blocked since June 2021 on TIME dotCom.
- No instant messaging apps and circumvention tools are found to be blocked.

Introduction

The Internet Monitoring Action Project (iMAP) aims to promote and defend Internet freedoms in South and Southeast Asia by pursuing the following interconnected objectives: (1) establish in-country networks that will monitor network interference and restrictions to the freedom of expression online; (2) promote legal advocacy to expand Internet freedoms; and (3) enable civil society action for a freer Internet. The purpose of the Internet Monitoring Action Project (iMAP) State of Internet Censorship Country Report is to understand whether and to what extent internet censorship events occurred through collection and analysis of network measurements in Malaysia during the testing period from 1 January 2022 to 30 June 2022.

The following sections of this report provide information on the network landscape and internet penetration levels, its legal environment with respect to freedom of expression, access to information and privacy, as well as about cases of censorship in Malaysia.

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[117] Bernama. (2021, April 21). MCMC blocks 2,195 websites, 19,756 phone lines promoting online gambling. *New Straits Times*. https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2021/04/684201/mcmc-blocks-2195-websites-19756-phone-lines-promoting-online-gambling

[118] FMT Reporters. (2021, September 23). 3,398 complaints received on online fraud, says minister. *Free Malaysia Today*. https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2021/09/23/3398-complaints-received-on-online-fraud-says-minister/

[119] Husain, N. H. (2021, December 8). Rakyat Malaysia antara paling ramai layari laman web lucah. *Sinar Harian*. https://m.sinarharian.com.my/mobile-article?articleid=218677

Background

In 2022, Malaysia has a total population estimated at 32.7 million, of which 30.7 million are citizens. There is a total of 17 million male population whilst the female population is 15.7 million. Gender ratio differs between citizens and non-citizens, with citizens stands at 103 males while non-citizens at 227 males for every 100 females.[120]

As a multicultural country, the major ethnic group Bumiputera comprised of 69.9 percent out of the 30.2 million citizens, followed by Chinese ethic group at 22.8 percent, Indian population at 6.6 percent, and other ethnic group at 0.7 percent.

The state of Selangor has the highest population composition at 21.6 percent, followed by Johor at 12.3 percent and Sabah at 10.4 percent. The population density is different, with Kuala Lumpur has the highest population density of 8,045 per square meter, followed by Putrajaya at 2,418 and Penang at 1,656 per square meter. The largest state, Sarawak has the lowest with 20 people per square kilometer, followed by the third largest state, Pahang at 45 people and the second largest state, Sabah at 46 people.

Political Landscape

Malaysia is in the state of political instability, with the change of 3 governments between February 2020 to October 2022.

Malaysia has been ruled by the National Front (*Barisan Nasional*) (BN) coalition since independence in 1957, except the period from 2018 to 2020 when the Alliance of Hope (*Pakatan Harapan*) (PH) coalition took over after successfully gaining the majority seats during the 14th General Election. The administration by PH was short-lived. After 22 months in power, it was ousted after a change of alliance by many of its key members, causing PH to lose its majority.

The Perikatan Nasional (PN) coalition took over in March 2020 after gaining the majority. Muhyiddin Yassin, who is President of the Malaysian United Indigenous Party (Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia) (BERSATU), a then-member of the PH coalition, became the Prime Minister. After 17 months in office, he resigned from the position in August 2021 due to instability within the PN coalition with the withdrawal of support by United Malays Nation Organisation (UMNO), a party aligned with PN.

Following Muhyiddin's resignation, Ismail Sabri who is the Vice President of the United Malays Nation Organisation (UMNO), a component party of the BN coalition, was appointed as the Prime Minister by The Yang di-Pertuan Agong in August 2022. The selection process was by way of submission of Statutory Declarations from all the Members of Parliament on their respective choice of Prime Minister to and verified by the King.[121]

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[120] Department of Statistics Malaysia. (2022, April 28). ICT Use and Access by Individuals and Households Survey Report, Malaysia 2021.
https://www.dosm.gov.my/v1/index.php?r=column/cthemeByCat&cat=395&bul_id=bCs4UINSQktybTR3THZ3a0RzV2RkUT09&menu_id=amVoWU54UTl0a21NWmdhMjFMMWcyZz09
[121] Ismail Sabri sworn in as Malaysia's ninth Prime Minister. (2021, September 15). The Star.
https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2021/08/21/ismail-sabri-sworn-in-as-ninth-prime-minister

Outside of the coverage period, Ismail Sabri called for Parliament to be dissolved in October 2022 after 15 months in office to make way for the national General Election. A new unity government was formed after the 15th General Election held on 19 November 2022.

Legal environment

The Federal Constitution expressly guarantees the right to freedom of expression under article 10.[122] Under the objects of the Communications and Multimedia Act (CMA) 1998, it is expressly stated that the act does not permit the censorship of the internet, under section 3(3). The Malaysian Government has also provided guarantees to companies with Malaysia Digital status [formerly known as Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC)] ensuring that internet will not be censored under Bill of Guarantees (BoGs), except illegal, obscene or indecent materials or any other actions that are deemed illegal in the physical world.[123]

Restrictions to freedom of expression online can be seen in the use of sections 211 and 233 of the CMA 1998, Sedition Act 1948, Penal Code, section 114A of the Evidence Act 1950.

Communications and Multimedia Act 1998

Both Sections 211 and 233 are applied in regulating offensive content on the internet that are deemed to be "indecent, obscene, false, menacing, or offensive in character with intent to annoy, abuse, threaten or harass any person". Section 211 deals with the prohibition of provision of such offensive content, whilst Section 233 deals with the improper use of network service or application service to carry out such offence through communication. Both sections carry a penalty of RM50,000 and below or imprisonment not exceeding one year or both.

Sedition Act 1948

Section 4(1) covers a range of actions that reflects "seditious" tendency, including carrying out actions or uttering seditious words, publishing or importing seditious publications. This section has been challenged to be unconstitutional and void in the past but ruled otherwise by the Federal Court. While not specifically stated, it has been applied to publication made online.[124] Malaysian artist, Fahmi Reza, was investigated under Section 4(1) of the Sedition Act 1948 and Section 233 of the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 over his satirical drawing posted online that depicted a cartoon ape in a royal attire.[125]

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[122] Malaysia Federal Constitution. https://lom.agc.gov.my/federal-constitution.php

[123] Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation. The Malaysia Digital (MD) Bill of Guarantees. https://mdec.my/wp-content/uploads/MD-BoG-Explanatory-Notes_30-June-2022.pdf

[124] Lim, I. (2015, October 6). Federal Court rules Sedition Act constitutional, UM's Azmi Sharom to stand trial. *Malay Mail*. https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2015/10/06/federal-court-rules-sedition-act-constitutional-ums-azmi-sharom-to-stand-tr/982345

[125] FMT Reporters. (2022, April 14). Fahmi Reza probed for sedition over satirical ape cartoon, say cops. *Free Malaysia Today*. https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2022/04/14/fahmi-reza-probed-for-sedition-over-satirical-ape-cartoon-say-cops/

Penal Code

Several sections of the Penal Code have been used in the past against online users for contents posted online, notably section 298A for online contents alleged to be insulting Islam[126], section 500 for criminal defamation over an online graphic resembling the then Health Minister Dr Adham Baba,[127] and section 505 for "statements conducing to public mischief" over a blog post written by a politician of an opposition party in criticism of the ruling government.[128]

Evidence Act 1950

Evidence Act 1950 does not impose punishment on offenses carried out in the online space, but the amendment came into force in 2012 with the introduction of section 114A has a direct impact on online users. Under section 114A, a person is deemed to be the publisher of online content, if the person's identity is shown to possess control over the content, or if the content originates from the network subscribed under the name of the person, or if the content originates from the computer in custody of the person. This presumption is problematic as it could lead to a situation where a person could be found responsible over actions committed online by another using the person's computer or the person's network. Malaysiakini, local online news portal, was found to be liable for contempt of court by the Federal Court over a comment left by its reader in relation to the judiciary on its portal.[129]

Reported cases of internet censorship

The Ministry of Communications and Multimedia (MCMC) do not publish list of blocked sites, however statements were released from time to time to announce the number of sites blocked. It was revealed that 2,195 websites promoting online gambling were blocked as of March 2021.[130] Between 2020 to July 2021, 960 phishing sites were blocked.[131] From 2018 to September 2021, 4,068 pornography sites were blocked by MCMC.[132]

[126] Teoh, P. Y. (2022, July 17). Man who allegedly insulted Islam arrested by police. *New Straits Times*.
https://www.nst.com.my/news/crime-courts/2022/07/814085/man-who-allegedly-insulted-islam-arrested-police

[127] SoyaCincau. (2021, March 9). Fahmi Reza investigated for alleged defamation against Ministry of Health. *SoyaCincau*.
https://soyacincau.com/2021/03/09/fahmi-reza-investigated-for-alleged-defamation-against-ministry-of-health/

[128] Palansamy, Y. (2022, May 21). Cops say probe opened after Kit Siang's tweet on Sri Lankans burning homes of their PM, Cabinet. *Malay Mail*.
https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2022/05/21/cops-say-openedafter-kit-siangs-tweet-on-sri-lankans-burning-homes-of-their-pm-cabinet/7969

[129] Abdul Rashid, H. R. (2021, February 21). Malaysiakini in contempt over readers' comments, rules Federal Court. *Malaysiakini*. https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/563548

[130] Bernama. (2021, April 21). MCMC blocks 2,195 websites, 19,756 phone lines promoting online gambling. *New Straits Times*.
https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2021/04/684201/mcmc-blocks-2195-websites-19756-phone-lines-promoting-online-gambling

[131] FMT Reporters. (2021, September 23). 3,398 complaints received on online fraud, says minister. *Free Malaysia Today*.
https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2021/09/23/3398-complaints-received-on-online-fraud-says-minister/

[132] Husain, N. H. (2021, December 8). Rakyat Malaysia antara paling ramai layari laman web lucah. *Sinar Harian*. https://m.sinarharian.com.my/mobile-article?articleid=218677

The Malaysian government made attempts to remove online contents, but do not have direct control over contents hosted on platforms registered outside of Malaysia.[133] In December 2021, MCMC requested Twitter to remove posts by netizens that were critical over the handling of flash floods by the government, however such request was rejected by Twitter.[134] In January 2022, MCMC requested Twitter to remove a post by political analyst made in September 2021 that criticized sympathizers of the Taliban, however it was rejected.[135]

Network Landscape and Internet Penetration

The first quarter of 2022 recorded fixed broadband penetration rate at 29.2% per 100 premises and mobile broadband at 124.1 per 100 inhabitants. For fixed broadband, Kelantan has the lowest penetration rates followed by Sabah and Pahang, while Putrajaya has the lowest mobile broadband penetration rate followed by Sabah and Labuan.[136]

Second quarter of 2022 recorded the average penetration rate of fixed-broadband is 45.3% per 100 premises, with the Selangor State has the highest at 59.9% followed by Kuala Lumpur at 57.5% and Putrajaya at 56.1%, while the lowest penetration rate is in the state of Kelantan at 21.2%, followed by the smallest state in Malaysia, Perlis at 26.6% and Sabah at 27%.[137] The average mobile broadband penetration is different at 127.9% per 100 inhabitants, with Kuala Lumpur having the highest penetration at 220.6 % per 100 inhabitants, followed by Penang at 153.4% and Negeri Sembilan at 140.9%. The lowest penetration rate of mobile-broadband is Putrajaya at 95.2%, followed by Labuan at 99.2% and Sabah at 101.7%.[138] Putrajaya is the administrative capital of Malaysia with its development began in 1995 and declared as a Federal Territory in 2001.[139] As at August 2020, areas with poor internet access covers less than 20 percent.[140]

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[133] Carvalho, M., & Tan, T. (2021, December 1). 'We cannot regulate online content.' *The Star*. https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2021/12/01/we-cannot-regulate-online-content

[134] Mohd, H. (2021, December 23). S'gor floods: MCMC tries to remove posts critical of govt, Twitter says "No." *Malaysiakini*. https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/604259

[135] Mohd, H. (2022, January 31). MCMC asks Twitter to take down analyst's tweet critical of Taliban sympathisers. *Malaysiakini*. https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/609118

[136] Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission. (2022). Communications & Multimedia Facts & Figures 1Q 2022. https://www.mcmc.gov.my/skmmgovmy/media/General/pdf2/1Q-2022_C-M_220704_BI.pdf

[137] Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission. (2022, October). Communications & Multimedia Facts & Figures 2Q 2022 https://cognos.mcmc.gov.my/ibmcognos/bi/?perspective=dashboard&pathRef=.public_folders%2FMy%2BContent_Backup%2FInfographic%2FDashboard%2FPublication%2FInfographic_Q22022_220928_Sharepoint&action=view&mode=dashboard&subView=model000001818a35bca1_00000000

[138] Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission. (2022, October). Communications & Multimedia Facts & Figures 2Q 2022 https://cognos.mcmc.gov.my/ibmcognos/bi/?perspective=dashboard&pathRef=.public_folders%2FMy%2BContent_Backup%2FInfographic%2FDashboard%2FPublication%2FInfographic_Q22022_220928_Sharepoint&action=view&mode=dashboard&subView=model000001818a35bca1_00000000

[139] Landau, E. (2020, September 25). NST175: From Prang Besar to Putrajaya. *New Straits Times*. https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2020/09/627093/nst175-prang-besar-putrajaya

[140] Bernama. (2020, August 3). Poor internet access in less than 20pc of Malaysia, Dewan Rakyat told. Malay Mail. https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2020/08/03/poor-internet-access-in-less-than-20pc-of-malaysia-dewan-rakyat-told/1890532

As of 2020, 54.3% of internet users are males and 45.7% are females. The largest age group of internet users falls under 20 to 24 years old at 34.1% followed by 25 to 29 years old at 11.8%.[141]

Internet and mobile service providers in Malaysia are privately-owned except for Telekom Malaysia whose majority shareholder consists of Khazanah Nasional, the investment holding arm under the Malaysian government. Telekom Malaysia is the largest broadband provider[142], whereas Maxis is the top mobile service provider, followed by Digi and Celcom.[143] Some of the main internet and mobile service providers are as follows:

Mobile Operators/ISPs	Fixed Internet	Mobile Internet
Celcom Axiata	x	x
Digi Telecommunications	x	x
Maxis Communications	x	x
redONE		x
Telekom Malaysia	x	x
Time dotCom	x	
Tune Talk		x
U Mobile	x	x
Yes	x	x
Yoodo		x

Findings of internet censorship in Malaysia

Blocking of Websites

Between 1 January to 30 June 2022, 1,039,734 measurements were collected from 21 Autonomous Systems tested in Malaysia.

OK	Confirmed	Anomaly	Failure	Total
998,822 (96.07%)	7,341 (0.71%)	24,378 (2.34%)	9,193 (0.88%)	1,039,734 (100%)

Table MY-A : Breakdown of total measurements collected between 1 January 2022 to 30 June 2022. Breakdown of total measurements collected identified through ASN between 1 January 2022 to 30 June 2022 tested in Malaysia can be found in Annex MY-1.

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[141] Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission. (2020). Internet Users Survey 2020, https://www.mcmc.gov.my/skmmgovmy/media/General/pdf/IUS-2020-Infographic.pdf

[142] Teoh, K.B., et al. (2022). A Study on Customer Satisfaction of Telekom Malaysia Broadband. Asia Pacific Journal of Management and Education, 5(1), 79-93 https://ejournal.aibpmjournals.com/index.php/APJME/article/viewFile/1429/1301

[143] Chu, M. (2022, June 29). Axiata, Telenor win approval to form Malaysia's top mobile operator. *Reuters*. https://www.reuters.com/markets/deals/malaysias-communications-regulator-approves-celcom-digi-merger-2022-06-29/

Based on OONI's data, a total of 75 sites were found to face instances of blocking from January to June 2022 based on returned IPs that are identified and known to implement blocking. The full list of websites found to be blocked can be found in Annex MY-2.

Number of confirmed blocking sites by category in Malaysia
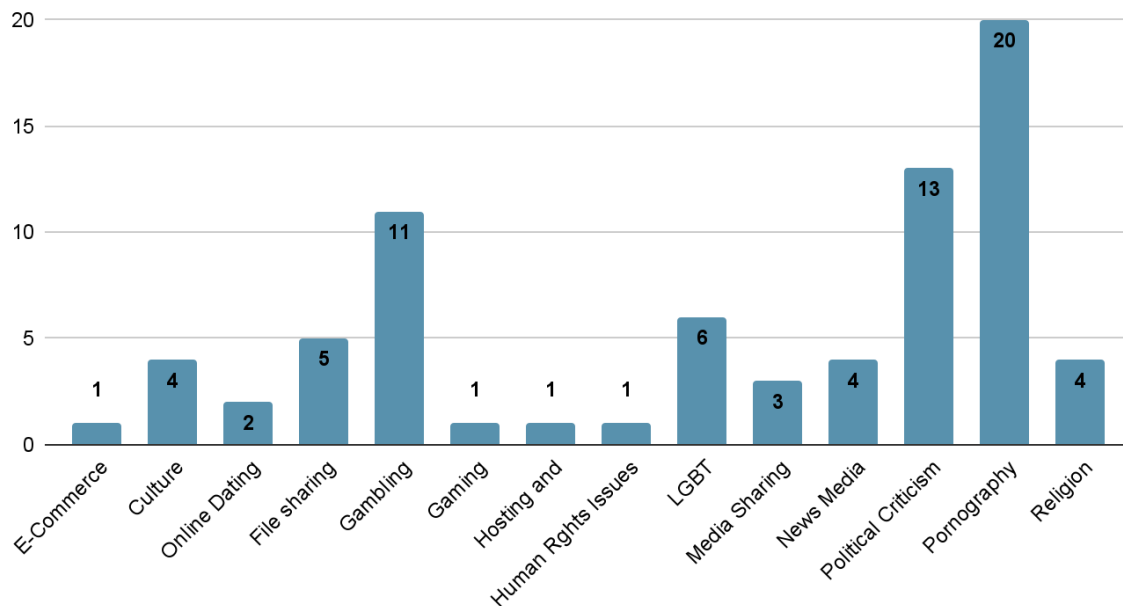
Chart MY-B shows the number of websites found to be blocked broken down into categories.

Based on measurements collected from January to June 2022, the main categories of websites with the most domains blocked are pornography (20), political criticism (14) , and gambling (11). These measurements of confirmed blockings revealed that the main method used to implement censorship is by way of DNS tampering, when the returned Internet Protocol (IP) matches an IP known to implement blocking.

In this report, focus will be made on the confirmed blocked websites under Political Criticism, News Media and LGBT categories to explore what was blocked in Malaysia during the coverage period.

Political Criticism

Websites found to be blocked	Description
monyetistana.com	NFT Fundraising Campaign website featuring a cartoon monkey mimicking royalty
steadyaku47.com	Blog with articles commenting on current affairs in Malaysia.
www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org	Islamic blog promoting Khilafah state with contents on political analysis with publications from Islamic perspectives
www.khilafah.com	Website promoting Khilafah state and Islamic affairs around the world

Websites found to be blocked	Description
bigdogdotcom.wordpress.com	Blog with articles commenting on current affairs in Malaysia, last updated in December 2020.
elizabethwong.wordpress.com	Blog belonging to politician Elizabeth Wong, a member of an opposition party, People's Justice Party (*Parti Keadilan Rakyat*). It was last updated in 2009.
peoplestrustmalaysia.wordpress.com	Blog with articles commenting on current affairs in Malaysia.
prabaganesan.wordpress.com	Blog with articles commenting on current affairs in Malaysia, managed by
www.bersih.org	Official website of the Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections formed by members of civil society organisations and political parties in campaigning for clean and fair elections
www.financetwitter.com	Blog featuring contents on economy and financial-related news including political impact on the market
edisisiasatmy.blogspot.com*	Blog exposing alleged scandals and corruption practices in the police force
dahalmi.wordpress.com*	Blog with articles commenting on current affairs, elections, forecasting, business development, economics in Malaysia.
steadyaku-steadyaku-husseinhamid.blogspot.my*	Blog with articles commenting on current affairs in Malaysia.
khilafah.net*	Website promoting Khilafah state and Islamic affairs around the world

Note: Websites marked with asterisk (*) were uncategorised and outside of the CitizenLab Malaysia country test list during the testing period. They are categorised under Political Criticism in this report by the researcher.

Amongst the websites found to be blocked at several instances, monyetistana.com is a recent addition first detected to be blocked on 29 April 2022 at 06:52 UTC on Celcom network and subsequently on Telekom, Digi and Maxis. This is an NFT site created for the selling of a caricature depicting a monkey in a royal suit by political activist Fahmi Reza. His artwork led to police investigation under Section 233 of the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 and his arrest. Around the same period in April 2022, he also discovered that he was barred by the Immigration Department from leaving the country, possibly due to his then-ongoing legal proceedings involving political graphics posted on social media. A report by Sinar Project on the findings of censorship of monyetistana.com can be found at https://sinarproject.org/digital-rights/measuring-and-detecting-network-interference/nft-fundraising-campaign-website-of-malaysian-artist-fahmi-reza-blocked.

The official website belonging to the Coalition for Clean and Fair Election, bersih.org was found to be blocked during the coverage period since June 2021 on AS9930 TIME dotCom, with the first detection of blocking found on 23 June 2021. This coincided with the launch of a stimulated recall election campaign called Sack or Keep? (*Pecat atau kekal?*) on 21 June

2021 as a platform for eligible registered voters to initiate a recall election, and could be the trigger that led to censorship. During the stimulated recall election, at least 10% of registered voters in the constituency must participate to decide whether to remove or to keep the representative of a constituency, without having to wait for general election.[144] Censorship is not found on other ISPs.

Malaysia

Web Connectivity Test, www.bersih.org
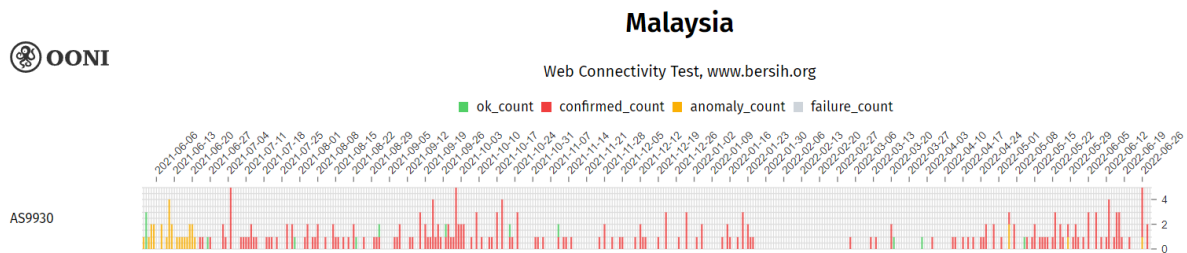
Graph shows the blocking of bersih.org from June 2021 to June 2022.

Steadyaku47.com and steadyaku-steadyaku-husseinhamid.blogspot.my are both managed by the same blogger with regular commentary on the current administration and political issues. The blogger is wanted by the police for an article deemed defamatory against the Pahang state royalty.[145] Steadyaku47.com is found to be blocked on AS4788 TM Net, AS9930 TIME dotCom, AS9534 Maxis Broadband and AS10030 Celcom Axiata throughout the coverage period, whereas steadyaku-steadyaku-husseinhamid.blogspot.my was only tested on AS9930 during coverage period and found to be blocked on all 3 measurements collected.

News Media

Websites found to be blocked	Description
www.malaysia-chronicle.com	News and commentary on local political issues.
seapa.wordpress.com	Inactive blog belonging to the Southeast Asian Press Alliance (SEAPA), with the latest post published on 27 November 2007. SEAPA is a non-profit organisation working on promoting and protecting press freedom in Southeast Asia.
www.jihadwatch.org	News and commentary centring on the jihad theology and ideology, and Islamic law.

Malaysia Chronicle was found to be blocked in our 2016 report and continues to be blocked during the coverage period by AS9930 TIME dotCom. It was categorised as a Political Criticism site in our 2016 report, but has since re-categorised under News Media site.

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[144] Subramaniam, S. (2021, June 21). Sack or Keep?: Bersih rolls out simulated recall polls for seats with party-hopping reps. *The Vibes*. https://www.thevibes.com/articles/news/31842/Bersih-rolls-out-simulated-recall-polls-campaign-for-seats-with-party-hopping-reps

[145] FMT Reporters. (2022, May 13). Cops looking for blogger steadyaku47 over 'defamatory' article. *Free Malaysia Today*. https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2022/05/13/cops-looking-for-blogger-steadyaku47-over-defamatory-article/

Blog belonging to the Southeast Asian Press Alliance (SEAPA) was found to be blocked only on 14 June 2022 by AS4788 TM Net, while remaining accessible for the rest of the coverage period.

Jihad Watch was first detected to be blocked on 2 February 2022 by AS9534 Maxis Broadband. The website was sparingly tested and found to be accessible after that in the same network from 16 March to 27 May 2022, with instances of blocking found on 25 April, 29 April, 3 May, 22 May. Measurements collected from 3 June onwards to the end of coverage period show a mixed of confirmed blockings and accessible counts, as shown in the graph below:

Malaysia

Web Connectivity Test, www.jihadwatch.org

ok_count   confirmed_count   anomaly_count   failure_count
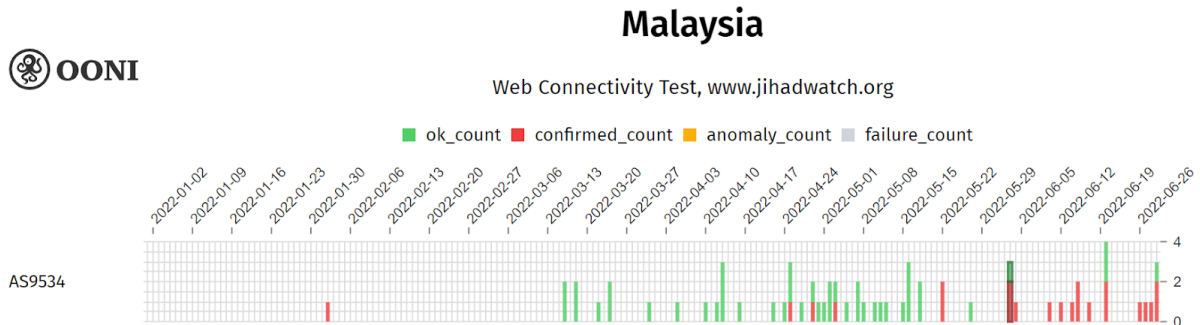
LGBT

Websites found to be blocked	Description
www.gaystarnews.com	Site on gay current affairs, entertainment, business and news
www.planetromeo.com	Dating site for gay, bi, and trans person
www.utopia-asia.com	Asian gay & lesbian resources and information site
justiceforsisters.wordpress.com	Local grassroots campaign to raise public awareness about issues surrounding violence and persecution against the Mak Nyah (trans women) community in Malaysia.
ilga.org	Official website of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association campaigning for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex human rights.
www.gay.com	Since 2017, it redirects to https://lalgbtcenter.org/, official website of Los Angeles LGBT Center

In our previous report in 2016, no LGBT sites were found to be blocked.

Measurements for Gay Star News began to be collected in November 2018. It was first found to be blocked since November 2018 under AS4818 Digi Telecommunications and continues to be blocked during coverage period under AS4788 TM Net, AS4818 Digi Telecommunications, AS9534 Maxis Broadband, and AS10030 Celcom Axiata.

Testing for Planet Romeo (now renamed as Romeo) began in April 2017. It was found to be blocked since the beginning of collection of measurement under AS17971 TM Net and AS4788 TM Net and has since collected confirmed blocking measurements. During the

coverage period, confirmed blockings were found under AS4788 TM Net, AS9930 TIME dotCom, AS4818 Digi Telecommunications, AS9534 Maxis Broadband, AS10030 Celcom Axiata and AS45960 YTL Communications.

Testing for Utopia Asia (www.utopia-asia.com) began in 2016. The first detection of confirmed blocking measurement was collected in April 2018 under AS4788 TMNet, and subsequently under AS4818 Digi Telecommunications in May 2018, AS17971 TM Net in September 2018 and AS38466 U-Mobile in November 2018.[146] During the coverage period, it is blocked under AS4788 TM Net, AS9930 TIME dotCom, AS4818 Digi Telecommunications, AS9534 Maxis Broadband, and AS10030 Celcom Axiata.

Justice for Sisters were accessible during the coverage period, except on 14 and 15 June 2022. The reason for temporary censorship is not known, but it is suspected to coincide with the period when the government announced that the animation Buzz Lightyear would not be screened in Malaysia due to its LGBT elements.[147]

Collection of measurements of ILGA website began in 2016. The first measurement of confirmed blocking was found in November 2017 by ASN9534 Maxis Broadband. During the coverage period, it continues to be blocked by ASN9534 only.

Gay.com used to be a social networking site for the LGBT community. Since 2017 it has been redirecting to https://lalgbtcenter.org/, the official website of Los Angeles LGBT Center. The measurements for gay.com began in 2016 for AS4788, AS4818 and AS17971. Detection of confirmed blocking was first found on 10 February 2017 when it was first tested under AS9534 Maxis Broadband, and continues to be blocked during the coverage period.

Blocking of Instant Messaging Apps

There are a total of 9,902 measurements collected on Facebook Messenger, 9,823 measurements on Signal, 10,511 measurements on Telegram, and 9,872 measurements on WhatsApp.

There is no instance of confirmed blocking found in the measurements on WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Signal or Telegram during the coverage period.

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[146] Open Observatory Network Interference. OONI Measurement Aggregation Toolkit (MAT) showing measurement collected from Malaysia on the testing of www.utopia-asia.com from January 1st, 2018 to December 30, 2018.
https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.utopia-asia.com&since=2018-01-01&until=2018-12-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
[147] Chua, D. (2022, June 13). #Showbiz: Buzz Lightyear's latest adventure will not be screened in Malaysia. New Straits Times.
https://www.nst.com.my/lifestyle/groove/2022/06/804618/showbiz-buzz-lightyears-latest-adventure-will-not-be-screened .

Blocking of Circumvention Tools

A total of 10,513 measurements were collected on Psiphon[148], 10,440 on Tor[149], and 118 on Tor Snowflake[150].

There is no instance of confirmed blocking found in the measurements of Psiphon, Tor or Tor Snowflake during the coverage period.

Acknowledgement of Limitations

The examination of the findings of this study is limited to network measurements that were collected from 1 January to 30 June 2022 to examine the most recent censorship trends and events.

The findings of this study are limited to a total of 260,452 URLs tested for censorship and shall not be deemed as an exhaustive list of websites affected by censorship[151].

Although the network measurements were collected from 21 local vantage points in Malaysia, the running of OONI software testing was not consistent across all networks. This study focuses on the main ASNs with higher counts of measurements collected.

Conclusion

The coverage period from January to June 2022 revealed that censorship is implemented mainly by way of DNS tampering and the focus of censorship lies heavily on pornography and gambling sites that fall within the scope of illegal and indecent content. However, the application of censorship is also seen on political criticism sites and news media sites, though the justification remains unknown, and its treatment varies by ISPs.

This study found that several outdated political criticism and news media sites are still subject to the risk of being blocked, indicating that they are still being monitored by

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[148] Open Observatory Network Interference. OONI Measurement Aggregation Toolkit (MAT) showing measurement collected from Malaysia on the testing of Psiphon from January 1st, 2022 to June 30, 2022.
https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=psiphon&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_cc
[149] Open Observatory Network Interference. OONI Measurement Aggregation Toolkit (MAT) showing measurement collected from Malaysia on the testing of Tor from January 1st, 2022 to June 30, 2022.
https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=tor&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_cc
[150] Open Observatory Network Interference. OONI Measurement Aggregation Toolkit (MAT) showing measurement collected from Malaysia on the testing of Tor Snowflake from January 1st, 2022 to June 30, 2022.
https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=torsf&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_cc
[151] Open Observatory Network Interference. OONI Measurement Aggregation Toolkit (MAT) showing measurement collected from Malaysia on the testing of web connectivity from January 1st, 2022 to June 30, 2022.
https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=domain

authorities despite long inactivity. More recent blockings reveal that sites appear to be in satirical of the royalty (monyetistana.com) or in criticism of the administration (such as www.bersih.org, edisisiasatmy.blogspot.com) are also targeted. With the announcement of merger of Digi Telecommunications and Celcom Axiata, it remains to be seen how censorship would be implemented after the new largest telco in Malaysia is formed.

The state of internet censorship could change from time to time. We encourage individuals in Malaysia to join us in increasing transparency around internet censorship, to reveal when and if internet censorship occurs, how internet censorship is being implemented and the sites affected by internet censorship. Should you wish to contribute, you may:

- Increase testing by using OONI Probe app, available on iOS and Android mobile, and desktop.
- Review the Malaysia country test list available at <https://github.com/citizenlab/test-lists/blob/master/lists/my.csv> and refer to the guidelines prepared by OONI at <https://ooni.org/get-involved/contribute-test-lists>
- Translate the OONI Probe app into your local language at <https://explore.transifex.com/otf/ooniprobe/>
- Find out more about the state of internet censorship in community discussions by joining the OONI's Slack channel at https://slack.ooni.org/.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank our local partners, activists, academicians, researchers, and anonymous users in Malaysia in running the OONI Probe, and the OONI team in providing support.

Annex MY-1

Breakdown of total measurements collected identified through ASN between 1 January 2022 to 30 June 2022

ASN	Name	Anomaly Count	Confirmed Count	Failure Count	Measurement Count
AS4788	Telekom Malaysia (TM)	6,596	2,850	2,906	315,439
AS4818	Digi Telecommunications	10,676	1,539	2,972	426,981
AS9534	Maxis Broadband	2,136	743	336	90,566
AS9930	Time dotCom	3,771	2,160	2,604	182,446
AS10030	Celcom Axiata	60	42	24	2,502
AS17971	TM-VADS DC Hosting	0	0	0	26
AS21859	Zenlayer Inc	269	0	25	6,546
AS23678	MyKris Asia	4	0	3	351
AS24020	University ITM	648	0	317	6,984
AS24028	Redtone	70	0	4	5,180
AS38278	Orient Telecoms	2	0	0	4
AS38322	Webe Digital	0	0	0	10
AS38466	U Mobile	5	4	0	279

AS45344	International Islamic University of Malaysia	4	0	0	20
AS45839	Shinjiru Technology	0	0	0	19
AS45960	YTL Communications	3	3	0	159
AS55720	Gigabit Hosting	5	0	1	200
AS132531	M East	10	0	0	58
AS136552	Pacific Comnet	116	0	1	1901
AS137005	Universiti Malaysia Kelantan	2	0	0	26
AS206804	EstNOC	1	0	0	27
	Total	24,378	7,341	9,193	1,039,734

Annex MY-2

Websites blocked in Malaysia between 1 January 2022 to 30 June 2022

Blocked Websites	Categories	ASN	Details
www.binance.com	E-commerce	AS4788, AS9534	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.binance.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
www.fanfiction.net	Culture	AS4788, AS4818, AS9534, AS10030	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.fanfiction.net&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
www.lushstories.com	Culture	AS4788, AS4818. AS9534, AS9930,	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.lushstories.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
subscene.com	Culture	AS4788, AS4818, AS9534, AS9930	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=subscene.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
www.literotica.com	Culture	AS4788, AS9534	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.literotica.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
adultfriendfinder.com	Online Dating	AS4788, AS4818, AS9534, AS9930	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=adultfriendfinder.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
sucrebook.com	Online Dating	AS4788, AS4818, AS9534, AS9930	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=sucrebook.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
thepiratebay.org	File-sharing	AS4788, AS4818,	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&doma

Blocked Websites	Categories	ASN	Details
		AS9534, AS9930	in=thepiratebay.org&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
www.rarbg.to	File-sharing	AS4788, AS4818, AS9534	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.rarbg.to&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
extratorrent.cc*	File sharing	AS4788, AS9534	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=extratorrent.cc&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
torrentz.eu*	File sharing	AS4788, AS9534	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=torrentz.eu&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
turbobit.net	File sharing	AS9930, AS9534	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=turbobit.net&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
www.europacasino.com	Gambling	AS9930, AS4818, AS9534, AS10030	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.europacasino.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
www.spinpalace.com	Gambling	AS9930, AS4818, AS9534, AS10030	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.spinpalace.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
www.goldenrivieracasino.com	Gambling	AS9930, AS4818, AS9534, AS45960	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.goldenrivieracasino.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
www.888casino.com	Gambling	AS4788, As4818, AS9534, AS9930	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.888casino.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
www.betfair.com	Gambling	AS4788, AS9930, AS4818, AS9534	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.betfair.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
www.pokerstars.com	Gambling	AS4788, AS9534	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.pokerstars.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
www.carnivalcasino.com	Gambling	AS9930, AS4818, AS9534	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.carnivalcasino.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn

Blocked Websites	Categories	ASN	Details
www.casino.com	Gambling	AS9930, AS4818, AS9534	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.casino.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
www.casinotropez.com	Gambling	AS9930, AS4818, AS9534	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.casinotropez.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
www.clubdicecasino.com	Gambling	AS4818, AS9930, AS9534	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.clubdicecasino.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
www.roxypalace.com*	Gambling	AS9930, AS4818, AS9534	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.roxypalace.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
forums.luckynetwork.id*	Gaming	AS4788	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=forums.luckynetwork.id&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
www.angelfire.com	Hosting and Blogging Platforms	AS9534	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.angelfire.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
gerakmalaysiablog.wordpress.com	Human Rights Issues	AS4788	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=gerakmalaysiablog.wordpress.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
www.gaystarnews.com	LGBT	AS4788, AS4818, AS9534, AS10030	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.gaystarnews.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
www.planetromeo.com	LGBT	AS4788, AS9930, AS4818, AS9534, AS10030, AS45960	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.planetromeo.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
www.utopia-asia.com	LGBT	AS4788, AS9930, AS4818, AS9534, AS10030	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.utopia-asia.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
justiceforsisters.wordpress.com	LGBT	AS4788	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=justiceforsisters.wordpress.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
ilga.org	LGBT	AS9534	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain

Blocked Websites	Categories	ASN	Details
			in=ilga.org&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
www.gay.com	LGBT	AS9534	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.gay.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
www.depositfiles.com	Media sharing	AS9534	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.depositfiles.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
dandanzan.com*	Media sharing	AS4788	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=dandanzan.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
9anime.to*	Media sharing	AS9534	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=9anime.to&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
seapa.wordpress.com	News Media	AS4788	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=seapa.wordpress.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
www.jihadwatch.org	News Media	AS9534	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.jihadwatch.org&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
www.malaysia-chronicle.com	News Media	AS9930	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.malaysia-chronicle.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
monyetistana.com	Political Criticism	AS4788, AS9534, AS4818, AS10030	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=monyetistana.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
steadyaku47.com	Political Criticism	AS4788, AS9930, AS9534, AS10030	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=steadyaku47.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org	Political Criticism	AS4788, AS4818, AS9534, AS10030	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
www.khilafah.com	Political Criticism	AS4788, AS4818, AS9534, AS10030, AS38466	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.khilafah.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn

Blocked Websites	Categories	ASN	Details
bigdogdotcom.wordpress.com	Political Criticism	AS4788	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=bigdogdotcom.wordpress.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
elizabethwong.wordpress.com	Political Criticism	AS4788	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=elizabethwong.wordpress.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
peoplestrustmalaysia.wordpress.com	Political Criticism	AS4788	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=peoplestrustmalaysia.wordpress.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
prabaganesan.wordpress.com	Political Criticism	AS4788	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=prabaganesan.wordpress.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
www.bersih.org	Political Criticism	AS9930	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.bersih.org&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
www.financetwitter.com	Political Criticism	AS9930	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.financetwitter.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
edisisiasatmy.blogspot.com*	Political Criticism	AS10030, AS4788, AS38466	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=edisisiasatmy.blogspot.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
dahalmi.wordpress.com*	Political Criticism	AS4788	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=dahalmi.wordpress.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
steadyaku-steadyaku-husseinhamid.blogspot.my*	Political Criticism	AS9930	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=steadyaku-steadyaku-husseinhamid.blogspot.my&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
khilafah.net*	Political Criticism	AS4788, AS9534	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=khilafah.net&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
www.malayporn.space	Pornography	AS4788, AS9930, AS4818, AS9534, AS10030	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.malayporn.space&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn

Blocked Websites	Categories	ASN	Details
www.pornhub.com	Pornography	AS4788, AS9930, AS4818, AS9534, AS10030	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.pornhub.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
www.sex.com	Pornography	AS9930, AS4788, AS4818, AS9534, AS10030	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.sex.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
www.xvideos.com	Pornography	AS4788, AS9930, AS4818, AS9534, AS10030	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.xvideos.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
xhamster.com	Pornography	AS4788, AS9930, AS4818, AS9534	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=xhamster.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
www.youporn.com	Pornography	AS9930, AS4818, AS9534, AS45960	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.youporn.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
beeg.com	Pornography	AS4788, AS9930, AS4818, AS9534	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=beeg.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
hotgaylist.com	Pornography	AS4788, AS9534	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=hotgaylist.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
lucahmelayu.club	Pornography	AS4788, AS4818	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=lucahmelayu.club&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
malaypornhub.com	Pornography	AS4788, AS9930, AS4818, AS9534	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=malaypornhub.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
www.89.com	Pornography	AS4788, AS9930, AS4818, AS9534	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.89.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
www.hustler.com	Pornography	AS4788, AS9930	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.hustler.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
xmalay.com	Pornography	AS4788, AS9930, AS9534	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=xmalay.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2

Blocked Websites	Categories	ASN	Details
			022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
www.wetplace.com	Pornography	AS9930, AS4818, AS9534	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.wetplace.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
www.playboy.com	Pornography	AS9534	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.playboy.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
bravotube.net*	Pornography	AS4788, AS9534	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=bravotube.net&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
www.porntrex.com*	Pornography	AS4788	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.porntrex.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
www.spankbang.com*	Pornography	AS4788	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.spankbang.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
pornhub.com	Pornography	AS10030	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=pornhub.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
xvideos.com	Pornography	AS10030, AS38466	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=xvideos.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
www.answering-islam.org	Religion	AS4788, AS4818, AS9534, AS10030	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.answering-islam.org&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
www.patheos.com	Religion	AS9534, AS10030	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.patheos.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn
www.thereligionofpeace.com	Religion	AS4788, AS9930, AS4818, AS9534, AS10030	https://explorer.ooni.org/chart/mat?probe_cc=MY&test_name=web_connectivity&domain=www.thereligionofpeace.com&since=2022-01-01&until=2022-06-30&axis_x=measurement_start_day&axis_y=probe_asn

Note: Websites marked with asterisk (*) were uncategorised and outside of the CitizenLab Malaysia country test list during the testing period. These websites are categorized by the researcher for purposes of this report.

iMAP State of Internet Censorship Report 2022

COUNTRY: MYANMAR

By Independent Researcher (Anonymous), Kelly Koh (Sinar Project),
Siti Nurliza Samsudin (Sinar Project)

Key findings

- **Blocking of independent New Media**. 112 out of 2,130 websites were detected 1,473 confirmed blocking counts through 6 local vantages under DNS level interference and HTTP level interference. There were 11 out of 31 websites' categories from OONI were found as confirmed blocking. Among 11 categories, News Media was experiential as the highest confirmed blocking measurement, following to pornography to the second largest blocking counts. Interestingly, within 117 government websites, OONI detects 15 websites were blocked from 2 vantage points of 2 ISPs.

- **Sign of internet outages:** IODA and Google Traffic data indicate that no major internet connectivity outages have been reported between January 1, 2022, and June 30, 2022. However, on May 16, 2022, and May 20, 2022, there were alerts regarding an Internet disruption and a possible internet outage.

- **Potential blocking of Instant Messaging Apps**: Apart from this finding period, we found no confirmed blocking in Facebook Messengers, Signal, and Telegram. In spite of this, Facebook Messenger found a large volume of anomalies during the test, which could be a sign of possible blocking. WhatsApp also detected a sign of potential blockings.

- **Circumvention Tools**: Circumvention tools appear to be blocked after the coup. As part of this study, Psiphon and Tor circumvention tools were detected accessible across the local networks.

Introduction

Myanmar today is among one of the most censored countries in the world. The country is ranked 17 out of 100 on internet freedom with a score of 9 out of 100 on the Global Freedom Index after the military coup.[152] The military shut down the internet, took control of the telecommunication infrastructure, blocked social media platforms, and increased intrusive surveillance to maintain their power. After one year of the coup, the Myanmar military arrested more than 100 journalists under section 505(A) of the penal code law.[153]

To examine the current state of internet censorship in Myanmar, this report looks at network interference measurements from OONI data during the period from 1 January 2022 to 30 June 2022.

In this study, we utilized OONI data which is run and collected by volunteers in Myanmar, to examine internet censorship in order to assess levels of internet freedom, freedom of expression and access to information. State surveillance has increased privacy and security concerns, immediately after the coup d'état in the country, however the period of assessment for this study was a year after the event.

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[152]   Freedom   House.   (2021).   *2021   Myanmar   Country   Report*. https://freedomhouse.org/country/myanmar/freedom-net/2021

[153] Human Rights Watch. (2021, July 27). *Myanmar: Junta Escalates Media Crackdown*. Myanmar: Junta Escalates Media Crackdown | Human Rights Watch (hrw.org)

Background

Myanmar is situated in Southeast Asia and is bordered on the north and north-east by China, on the east and south-east by Laos and Thailand. According to DATAREPORTAL[154], the population of Myanmar was 55.02 million in January 2022. 51.8 percent of Myanmar's population is female, while 48.2 percent of the population is male. Out of 55.02 million, 31.8 percent of the population lived in urban areas, while the majority (68.2 percent) lived in rural areas.

Myanmar is divided into seven states and seven regions, as one union territory which is divided generally by ethnic group. Kachin, Shan, Mon, Kayan, Kayin, Chin, Rakhine and Shan States are predominantly ethnic. As highlighted, almost three quarters of the population in Myanmar live in rural areas, which is largely dominated by ethnic minorities.[155]

Even though digital and network access has grown rapidly since 2011[156], the benefits of the digital transformation in Myanmar are spread unevenly especially among women and ethnic minorities from rural communities. Gendered cultural biases limit Myanmar women from accessing both digital tools and skills.[157] Less women than men use the internet.[158] Communities living in rural and remote areas, also experience infrastructure barriers to accessing the internet Including, lack of basic infrastructure such as electricity, cellular and internet connections.

Figure 1: Individuals using the Internet (% of population) - Myanmar

Political Landscape

Post 2010: Reforms

Myanmar (or Burma as it was previously known) has undergone significant political and economic reforms under military rule for many decades. Until the elections in November

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[154] Datareportal. (2022, February 15). *Digital 2022: Myanmar.* https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2022-myanmar

[155] Open Development Myanmar. (2016, November 21). *Population and Censuses.* https://opendevelopmentmyanmar.net/topics/population-and-censuses/

[156] The World Bank. (n.d). *Individuals using the Internet (% of population) - Myanmar.* https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.ZS?end=2020&locations=MM&start=1990&view=chart

[157] Chung, M. and Chung, P. (2020). Mekong women in open data. *Open Development Initiative.* Retrieved September 30, 2022, from https://data.opendevelopmentmekong.net/en/library_record/mekong-women-in-open-data

[158] Statista. (2022). *Share of internet users in Myanmar in January 2019, by age and gender.* https://www.statista.com/statistics/1060308/myanmar-share-of-internet-users-by-age-and-gender/

Internet users in Myanmar (% of population)

In 2020, approximately 35.1 percent of the population in Myanmar had access to the internet. This was a dramatic increase from 2011, in which less than one percent of the population in Myanmar were using the internet.

Source: World Bank • Created with Datawrapper
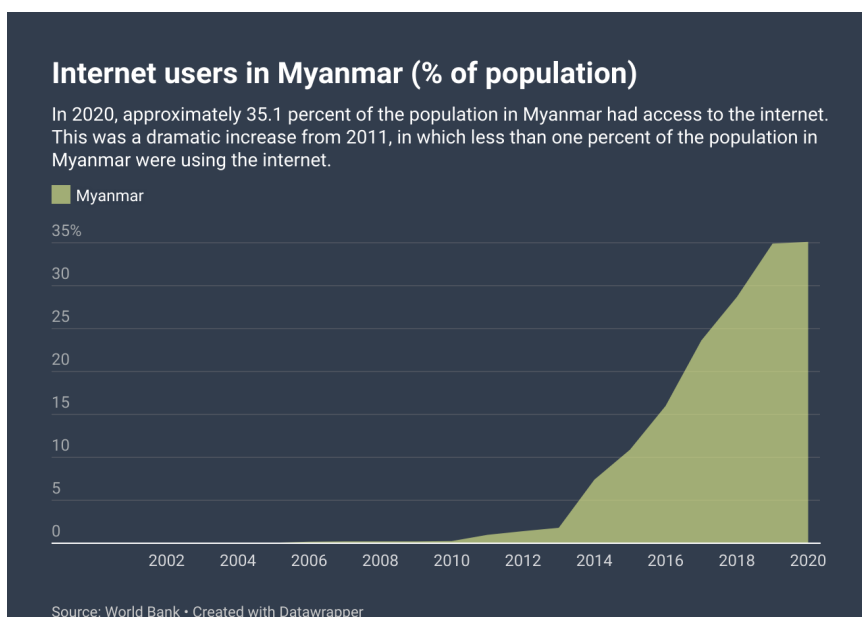
[**Figure 1: Individuals using the Internet (% of population) - Myanmar**]

2010 the military junta ruled from 1962 until 2011. In the period of military rule, activists who defended information access, freedom of expression, and human rights were arrested regularly. In 2012, the country transitioned to democratization which seemed to be the end of military rule. Thein Sein who was a former president of Myanmar, becoming the country's first civilian president[159] in the first half of the century, however, it was still under military influence. During that period of time the government released hundreds of political prisoners including the chairperson of NLDs Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest. The NLDs party began campaigning in 2011, with Aung San Suu Kyi leading the party in negotiations to attain multiparty democracy.

Post 2016: Civil military relations

In the 2015 general election, the NLD party won the election and became the first non-military governments ending 54 years of military rule. The NLD government has endeavored to maintain a friendly relationship with the junta since coming to power in 2016. The high profile case of persecution of the Rohingya ethnic minority in Rakhine State, shifted the international perception of the state counselor Aung San Suu Kyi who was highly criticized for the denying all accusations of genocide at the International Court of Justice in 2019.[160]

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[159]Chaudhury, D. R. (2021, February 1). *In points: A timeline of Myanmar's politics.*

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/in-points-a-timeline-of-myanmars-politics/articles how/80625630.cms

[160] Banerjee, S. (2022) The Enduring Challenges to Democratic Transition in Myanmar. *Observer Research Foundation*. Retrieved September 30, 2022, from https://www.orfonline.org/research/enduring-challenges-to-democratic-transition-in-myanmar/

Post 2021: Military coup

Although the Aung San Suu Kyi maintained an amiable relationship with the military regime, General Min Aung Hlaing seized back the power after 10-year non-military ruling. On February 1, 2021, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and other military leaders staged a coup and detained and charged de facto civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi who won the landslide general elections in November 2020 with corruption and other crimes. The military claimed that the election was irregular due to unfair voter turnout and detained many NLD party members. In the week after the coup, nationwide peaceful protests took place, known as Spring Revolution, which called for the military to relinquish power.[161] Street demonstrations occurred throughout the country, civil servants enacted a Civil Disobedience Movement through strikes, a flurry of images, print materials, and graffiti slogans against the military dictatorship were shared physically and via social media. The Human Rights Watch report that the SAC denied the call for the military to relinquish power and killed at least 1,200 protesters and bystanders, including approximately 75 children, and have detained over 8700 government officials, activists, journalists, and civil servants.[162]

An opposition party was formed consisting of ousted NLD lawmakers, protest leaders, and activists from several minority groups, to counter the SAC and represent a civilian parallel government known as the National Unity Government (NUG). On September 7, 2021, the NUG declared war on the junta and formed an armed division known as the People's Defense Force (PDF).[163] By 2022, nationwide civil war between ethnic arms groups, PDF and SAC has been occurring not only in the ethnic territories but also in the cities.[164] Since the coup, the military imposed martial law in several townships and severely targeted ethnic armed groups. Continued military rule threatens human rights, freedoms of expression and perpetuates persecution against ethnic minorities and women. There was a significant impact of violence perpetrated against women and girls before the coup. Post coup, women and girls are more likely to become victims of emotional and physical abuse due to increased safety concerns. A new United Nations survey has found that women feel unsafe even in their home at night.[165]

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[161] Min Naing Soon. (2021, November 2). *The current crisis in Myanmar: The different political positions of the Mon people*. https://www.tni.org/en/article/the-current-crisis-in-myanmar-the-different-political-position-of-the-mon-people

[162] Human Rights Watch (2022). *Myanmar Events of 2021*. https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/myanmar-burma

[163] Mathieson, D. S. (2021, September 7). *Myanmar's shadow government formally declares war*. https://asiatimes.com/2021/09/myanmars-shadow-government-formally-declares-war/

[164] Maizland, L. (2022, January 31). *Myanmar's troubled history: Coups, military rule, and ethnic conflict.* https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/myanmar-history-coup-military-rule-ethnic-conflict-rohingya.

[165] Yee, T. H. (2022, March 8). *Effects of Myanmar coup especially devastating for women: UN survey. The Straits Times*. https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/effects-of-myanmar-coup-especially-devastating-for-women-un-survey

Legal Environment

A number of laws both directly and indirectly related to censorship in Myanmar. These include the following:

Internet freedom in Myanmar collapsed following the February 2021 military coup reported by Freedom House 2021[166]. Several laws amended and proposed which affect both directly and indirectly related to freedom of expression online, access to information online, online privacy, censorship and surveillance in the digital space in Myanmar. These include the following:

- Constitution of the Republic of Myanmar (2008)

- Draft Cybersecurity Bill (2021)[167]

- Electronic Transactions Law (2004, amended 2021)

- Telecommunications Law (2013)

- Law Protecting the Privacy and Security of Citizens (2017, August 2020)

- Draft Right to Information Bill (2016)

- Myanmar Penal Code (1861)

- Broadcast Law (2015)

- Official Secrets Act (1923)

Constitution of the Republic of Myanmar (2008)

Among the rights, the 2008 constitution[168] somewhat guarantees all citizens the right to freedom of expression under Articles 354 and 365. However, the Constitution does not fully protect the right to freedom of expression. Articles 354[169] (liberty of expression and publication) and 365[170] (freedom of artistic expression) do not comply with international standards. Furthermore, it threatens freedom of expression for journalists and human rights defenders, said Human Rights Watch[171].

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[166] Freedom House. (2021). *2021 Myanmar Country Report*. https://freedomhouse.org/country/myanmar/freedom-net/2021

[167]. Human Rights Watch. (2022). *Cyber security law draft (1)*. (Free Expression Myanmar, Trans.). State Administration Council. (Original work published 2022).

[168] *2008-Constitution* (MM).

[169] *2008-Constitution* (MM).

[170] *2008-Constitution* (MM).

[171] Human Rights Watch. (2019, April 11). *Myanmar: Guarantee the right to free expression in the constitution*.https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/04/11/myanmar-guarantee-right-free-expression-constitution

Draft Cybersecurity Bill (2021)[172]

A draft Cybersecurity Bill was first introduced in 2019[173], but it was abandoned. This Cybersecurity bill (1.0) was again proposed by the State Administration Council a week after the coup in 2021. On 28 January 2022[174], the military revised the draft law (Law 2.0) by requesting a few stakeholders' feedback. Based on Free Expression Myanmar (FEM) analysis, the new draft Cyber Law (2.0) repeats and adds on the repressive provisions of previous drafts (2021), seriously threatening the safety and security of Myanmar's digital space[175]. This amendment further threatens privacy, information access and freedom of expression. The Asia legal adviser at Human Rights Watch, Linda Lakhdhir, told Human Rights Watch that the proposed cybersecurity law would consolidate the junta's ability to conduct pervasive censorship and surveillance and hamper the operation of businesses in Myanmar,"[176] as this law does not only apply to social media and other content-sharing platforms, but to digital marketplaces, search engines, financial services, data processing services, and communications services providing messaging or video calls and games.

· *Electronic Transactions Law (2004, 2014 and amended 2021)*

The Myanmar Electronic Transactions Law[177], originally enacted in 2004, and was amended in 2014 to remove some problematic provisions. On February 15, 2021, after the military coup, the SAC amended this law again without forewarning and opportunity to consult. This new amendment mostly copies the 2021 Draft Cybersecurity Bill, including Articles 9/38, 38a, 38d and 38e. This new crime amendment will restrict further digital rights.

The 2021 amendment extends criminalizing antiregime statements which further restricts information access and freedom of expression. The new crimes and their long prison sentences will create significant risk to the right to freedom of expression especially in the digital space. Dozens of journalists have been forced to flee following the military's crackdown on press freedoms. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), more than 100 journalists were arrested under criminal charges in 2021[178].

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[172] Human Rights Watch. (2022). *Cyber security law draft (1)*. (Free Expression Myanmar, Trans.). State Administration Council. (Original work published 2022).

[173] *Myanmar Cyber Law (Draft) 2019* (MM).

[174] Gan, A. & See, K. (2022, February 12). Myanmar: *The introduction of a prohibition on the use of virtual private networks.* Global Compliance News. https://www.globalcompliancenews.com/2022/02/12/myanmar-the-introduction-of-a-prohibition-on-the-use-of-virtual-private-networks250122/

[175] Free Expression Myanmar. (2022, January 22). *Military's cyber security bill worse than their previous draft.* https://freeexpressionmyanmar.org/militarys-cyber-security-bill-worse-than-their-previous-draft/

[176] Human Rights Watch. (2022, February 15). *Myanmar: Scrap Draconian Cybersecurity Bill*. https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/02/15/myanmar-scrap-draconian-cybersecurity-bill

[177] *Electronic Transaction Law 2004* (MM).

[178] Freedom House. (2022). *2022 Myanmar Country Report*. https://freedomhouse.org/country/myanmar/freedom-world/2022

Reported cases of internet censorship

The internet in Myanmar was introduced in the early 2000 when the first internet connection was established after the former president Thein Sein under a new regime of civilian government, rejected almost all forms of censorship by opening internet access for all.[179] Since 2011, the internet accessibility in Myanmar seems relatively positive until 2019, during ongoing conflict between the military junta and ethnic armed groups in Rakhine state, where the Rohingya ethnic group was specifically targeted. The Ministry of Transportation and Communication, ordered four internet service providers to suspend internet access including mobile internet services to nine townships in northern Rakhine state and southern Chin state.[180] Together, more than 200 websites and several Indigenous news sites were blocked.[181] Free Expression Myanmar reports that digital freedom of expression in Myanmar declined between 2018 to 2020[182], see Table 1.

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic a proliferation of fake news started spreading regarding the pandemic which was challenging for the government to counter. Then the Myanmar Press Council released a press statement including a list of sites viewed as spreading "fake news".[183] The 2020 OONI report, showed that Internet Service Providers (ISPs) in Myanmar received a directive from the Ministry of Transport and Communications to block 230 websites.[184] Telenor Myanmar (previously renamed as ATOM) disclosed that they blocked access to 230 websites, but the list of these URLs has not been published. However, the OONI measurement revealed that 174 domains had been blocked through DNS by Telenor Myanmar under the pornography and news media categories (under the pretext that these sites could potentially be viewed as "fake news"). The Myanmar Press Council's list of blocked domains contain sites belonging to news outlet and content relating to News pornography. In March 2020, the Frontier reported that 50 "fake news"[185] sites including ethnic media outlets, such as Rakhine-based Development Media Group (DMG) and Narinjara were blocked under section 77 of the Telecommunications Law. According to Myanmar illegal contents such as drugs, alcohol, or gambling, and pornography are highly

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[179] Beech, H. (2021, March 3). *Myanmar's military deploys digital arsenal of repression in crackdown.* The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/01/world/asia/myanmar-coup-military-surveillance.html

[180] Human Rights Watch. (2022). *Cyber security law draft (1)*. (Free Expression Myanmar, Trans.). State Administration Council. (Original work published 2022).

[181] Human Rights Watch. (2022, February 15). *Myanmar: Scrap Draconian Cybersecurity Bill*. https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/02/15/myanmar-scrap-draconian-cybersecurity-bill

[182] Freedom House. (2020). *2020 Myanmar Country Report.* https://freeexpressionmyanmar.org/freedom-of-the-net-2020/

[183] Myanmar Press Council. (n.d). *Statements.* http://myanmarpresscouncil.org/activities-mpc/statements-mpc/401-statements4-20.html

[184] Phyu Phyu Kyaw. Xynou, M. & Filasto, A. (2020, May 6). *Myanmar blocks "fake news" websites amid COVID-19 pandemic.* OONI. https://ooni.org/post/2020-myanmar-blocks-websites-amid-covid19/

[185] Kyaw Lin Htoon & Kean, T. (2020, March 27). *Operators split as Telenor rejects govt order to block 'fake news' sites. Frontier.* https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/operators-split-as-telenor-rejects-govt-order-to-block-fake-news-sites/

restricted in addition to prohibition of sexual education content and homosexuality.[186] By far the most censored content online is that of political dissidents. Any criticism or anti-military content, directly or indirectly in opposition to the current military authorities can lead to jail sentences under existing laws. Human Rights Watch reported 98 journalists arrested for violating section 505A of the penal code according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, as of October 25, 2021.[187] Since the passing of the year anniversary of the coup d'etat, more than 100 journalists have been arrested.[188]

February 1, 2021, marked significant disruptions to the country's internet connection. Digital access became limited for all in Myanmar, exceptionally impacted were ethnic groups living in conflict-affected zones, including the Rohingya. The military regime banned local ethnic news outlets,[189] as well as satellite TV and radio, which are the dominant forms of access to information in rural areas.[190] Additionally, Freedom House reported that 2000+ websites have been blocked from February to August 2021, under the Telecommunication Law[191] and Myanmar's low ranking in 2018 with 36 points dropped further to 17 points in 2021 (see Table 1).

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[186] Mathenge, R. (2022, September 19). *Internet censorship in Myanmar and how to evade it in 2022.* Privacysavvy. https://privacysavvy.com/geoblocking/censorship/myanmar-intee-it/rnet-censorship-evad

[187] Human Rights Watch (2022). *Myanmar Events of 2021*. https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/myanmar-burma

[188] Freedom House. (2022). *2022 Myanmar Country Report*. https://freedomhouse.org/country/myanmar/freedom-world/2022

[189] Human Rights Watch. (2021, March 6). *Myanmar: Junta bans satellite television.* https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/05/06/myanmar-junta-bans-satellite-television

[190] Ratcliffe, R. (2021, May 5). *Myanmar junta bans satellite dishes in media crackdown*. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/05/myanmar-junta-bans-satellite-dishes-in-media-crackdown

[191] Freedom House & Freedom Expression Myanmar. (2021). *Freedom of net in Myanmar*. chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://freeexpressionmyanmar.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/FOTN-2021.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1ycPm9oGnENplT-MkwHbJJTZPjcrCkFIPcQjCZjPlfoghRGQ9jlBIrL6o

အင်တာနက်လွတ်လပ်မှု အခြေအနေ Internet Freedom Status[1]	၂၀၁၈ **2018** လွတ်လပ်မှုမရှိ **Not Free**	၂၀၁၉ **2019** လွတ်လပ်မှုမရှိ **Not Free**	၂၀၂၀ **2020** လွတ်လပ်မှုမရှိ **Not Free**	၂၀၂၁ **2021** လွတ်လပ်မှုမရှိ **Not Free**
A) လက်လှမ်းမီမှုအပေါ် အတားအဆီးများ (၀-၂၅ မှတ်) Obstacles to Access (0–25 pts)	၁၀ မှတ် 10	၁၀ မှတ် 10	၇ မှတ် 7	၄ မှတ် 4
B) အကြောင်းအရာများကို ကန့်သတ်မှု (၀–၃၅ မှတ်) Limits on Content (0–35 pts)	၁၆ မှတ် 16	၁၆ မှတ် 16	၁၃ မှတ် 13	၇ မှတ် 7
C) အသုံးပြုသူ အခွင့်အရေး ချိုးဖောက်မှုများ (၀-၄၀ မှတ်) Violations of User Rights (0–40 pts)	၁၀ မှတ် 10	၁၀ မှတ် 10	၁၁ မှတ် 11	၆ မှတ် 6
စုစုပေါင်း* (၀-၁၀၀) Total* (0–100)	၃၆ မှတ် 36	၃၆ မှတ် 36	၃၁ မှတ် 31	၁၇ မှတ် 17

Table 1: Freedom on the Net 2021 country report

On February 3, 2021, Access Now reported that the military ordered all internet providers to block social media such as Facebook, including Instagram, WhatsApp, and Messenger[192]. Almost half of the population[193] in Myanmar use Facebook to access and contribute information. Facebook is synonymous with the internet for the user in Myanmar. Although the military regime restricted using Facebook in Myanmar, citizens in Myanmar used circumvention tools like virtual private network (VPN) to overcome Facebook access restriction. To further restrict the flow of information to and from the country, the regime is set to ban VPN use.[194] On February 5, 2022 Privacysavvy reported that Twitter and Instagram were also blocked.[195]

Surveillance of the Myanmar population has increased significantly through developing technical tools,amending laws and introduction of the Cybersecurity bill to monitor and target critics and protesters. The New York Times reported that the military uses dual-purpose surveillance, hacking, and forensic technology to monitor and target critics and protesters.[196] For example, by installing spyware to private communications, they can monitor users via listening conversation on phone, view private messages, and track people's locations.

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[192] Accessnow. (2022, March 18). *Internet access, censorship, and the Myanmar coup*. https://www.accessnow.org/update-internet-access-censorship-myanmar/

[193] Datareportal. (2022, February 15). *Digital 2022: Myanmar.* https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2022-myanmar

[194] Mathenge, R. (2022, September 19). *Internet censorship in Myanmar and how to evade it in 2022.* Privacysavvy. https://privacysavvy.com/geoblocking/censorship/myanmar-internet-censorship-evade-it/

[195] Mathenge, R. (2022, September 19). *Internet censorship in Myanmar and how to evade it in 2022.* Privacysavvy. https://privacysavvy.com/geoblocking/censorship/myanmar-intee-it/rnet-censorship-evad

[196] Beech, H. (2021, March 3). Myanmar's military deploys digital arsenal of repression in crackdown. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/01/world/asia/myanmar-coup-military-surveillance.html

Furthermore, the military's intent to introduce a new Cybersecurity Bill[197][198] is likely to increase digital control, suppress free speech and access to information across Myanmar.

All in all, Myanmar today is among one of the most censored countries in the world. Through extreme restrictions and control the military regime has limited internet access through online surveillance, intimidation and threats, physical shutdowns and through laws and regulations that if violated incurred criminal charges with heavy punishments. The military junta's main objective here appears to be total control over the telecommunication infrastructure in an effort to block social media platforms, and increase intrusive surveillance to maintain power and crush dissent.

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[197] Human Rights Watch. (2022). *Cyber security law draft (1)*. (Free Expression Myanmar, Trans.). State Administration Council. (Original work published 2022).

[198] Human Rights Watch. (2022, February 15). *Myanmar: Scrap Draconian Cybersecurity Bill*. https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/02/15/myanmar-scrap-draconian-cybersecurity-bill

Network Landscape and Internet Penetration

Digital access has grown quickly in Myanmar since its relatively recent entry into the digital revolution in 2011. Increasingly affordable SIMs and smartphones, combined with more internet service providers and high-speed connection access points has meant that as at January 2021, there were 69.43 million mobile SIMs connections[199] and 23.65 million internet users,[200] compared to a total population of Myanmar of 54.61 million in 2021, amounting to half the population of Myanmar before the military coup.

The Myanmar government began to liberalize towards a digital transformation and invited private investments into the development of communications infrastructure and technology. Similarly, internet censorship also declined for the first time during this period of historical change. International news sites, including Voice of America, BBC, and Radio Free Asia, and local news such as the Democratic Voice of Burma and Irrawaddy, long blocked by Burmese censors, were suddenly accessible.[201] The transformation saw the government's openness to the world, as well as significant relaxation of its censorship policies, noted in Freedom Express, which showed that internet censorship had declined slightly between 2018 to 2020.

Myanmar's four telecommunications network operators[202] - Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications (MPT) is a state owned enterprise under the supervision of the Ministry of Transport and Communication. Ooredoo is a subsidiary of the Qatari Ooredoo Group but intends to sell it to Singapore vehicle Nine Communications Pte. Ltd, with an enterprise value of $576 million, according to Ooredoo Group announcement on September 8, 2022.[203] Telenor (a Norwegian firm) recently withdrew and sold to the M1 Group, which has a master lease agreement with military-backed Mytel.[204] Similarly, while there are more than 30 internet service providers[205] licensed under the Ministry of Transport and Communications (MoTC) but the market is dominated by four main ISPs: Myanmar Net, Myanmar MPT,

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[199] SIMs users have multiple SIM cards.Freedom House. (2021). *2021 Myanmar Country Report*. https://freedomhouse.org/country/myanmar/freedom-net/2021

[200] Datareportal. (2022, February 12). *Digital 2022: Myanmar.* https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2021-myanmar

[201] Poetranto, I. (2012). *Update on information controls in Burma.* OpenNet Initiative. https://opennet.net/blog/2012/10/update-information-controls-burma

[202] Fenwick, S. (2020). *Myanmar: Mobile Network Experience Report.* Open Signal. https://www.opensignal.com/reports/2020/10/myanmar/mobile-network-experience

[203] Ooredoo. (2022, September 8). *Ooredoo Group announces the sale of its telecom business in Myanmar to nine communications Pte. Ltd at an enterprise value of USD 576 million.* https://www.ooredoo.com/en/media/news_view/ooredoo-group-announces-the-sale-of-its-telecom-business-in-myanmar-to-nine-communications-pte-ltd-at-an-enterprise-value-of-usd-576-million/

[204] Klesty, V. (2021, July 8). *Telenor quits Myanmar with $105 mln sale to Lebanon's M1 Group.* Reuters. https://www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/telenor-sells-myanmar-operations-m1-group-105-mln-2021-07-08/

[205] News Media Lists. (n.d.). *Internet providers in Myanmar.* https://www.newsmedialists.com/isp/myanmar

MyTel, and 5BB.[206] Freedom House reported that the fixed-line internet speed is slower than average after the coup.[207] Since February 2021, all media, internet, and mobile connections have been fully controlled by the State Administrative Council (SAC)[208] affecting internet speeds and social media platform access and websites have been banned.[209]

Though internet users rapidly increased in the previous year, the unexpected transition back to high censorship and Internet restrictions has seen periodic blackouts of the internet, inability to use VPN, reduction of internet speed, increased mobile data and SIMs card price, telecommunications infrastructure problem, and unstable electricity supply affecting not just connectivity but general living standards. The general impact has resulted in a general reduction of online usage, mainly due to increased fear and insecurity. Additionally, pro-democracy protectors or Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) advocates proactively discourage the use of mobile connections using telco-services that are associated with military junta, further reducing internet usage and online activities.

Regardless, the systematic and nationwide internet shutdowns for 8 hours from 1 am to 9 am was mandated immediately after the military coup took over and lasted for approximately two weeks[210] (see figure 2).[211] Although internet connections have relatively been restored, the military had continued to crackdown on internet usage and accessibility by repeatedly reducing the network speed, and blocking mobile networks across 22 townships[212] until now.

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[206] Dataxis. (n.d.). *Fixed broadband and voice - Myanmar*. https://dataxis.com/product/market-report/fixed-broadband-and-voice-myanmar/

[207] Freedom House. (2021). *2021 Myanmar Country Report*. https://freedomhouse.org/country/myanmar/freedom-net/2021

[208] Lehmann-Jacobsen, E. (2021). *The military tightens its grip on access to information in Myanmar*. The Diplomat. https://thediplomat.com/2021/02/the-military-tightens-its-grip-on-access-to-information-in-myanmar/

[209] Lehmann-Jacobsen, E. (2021). *The military tightens its grip on access to information in Myanmar*. The Diplomat. https://thediplomat.com/2021/02/the-military-tightens-its-grip-on-access-to-information-in-myanmar/

[210] Netblocks. (2021, January 31). *Internet disrupted in Myanmar amid apparent military uprising.* https://netblocks.org/reports/internet-disrupted-in-myanmar-amid-apparent-military-uprising-JBZrmlB6

[211] Netblocks. (2021, January 31). *Internet disrupted in Myanmar amid apparent military uprising.* https://netblocks.org/reports/internet-disrupted-in-myanmar-amid-apparent-military-uprising-JBZrmlB6

[212] Myanmar Mission New York. (2021). *Letter from Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun to Secretary-General H.E. Mr. Antonio Guterres on 3 Oct 2021*. https://www.myanmarmissionnewyork.org/post/letter-from-ambassador-kyaw-moe-tun-to-secretary-general-h-e-mr-antonio-guterres-on-3-oct-2021
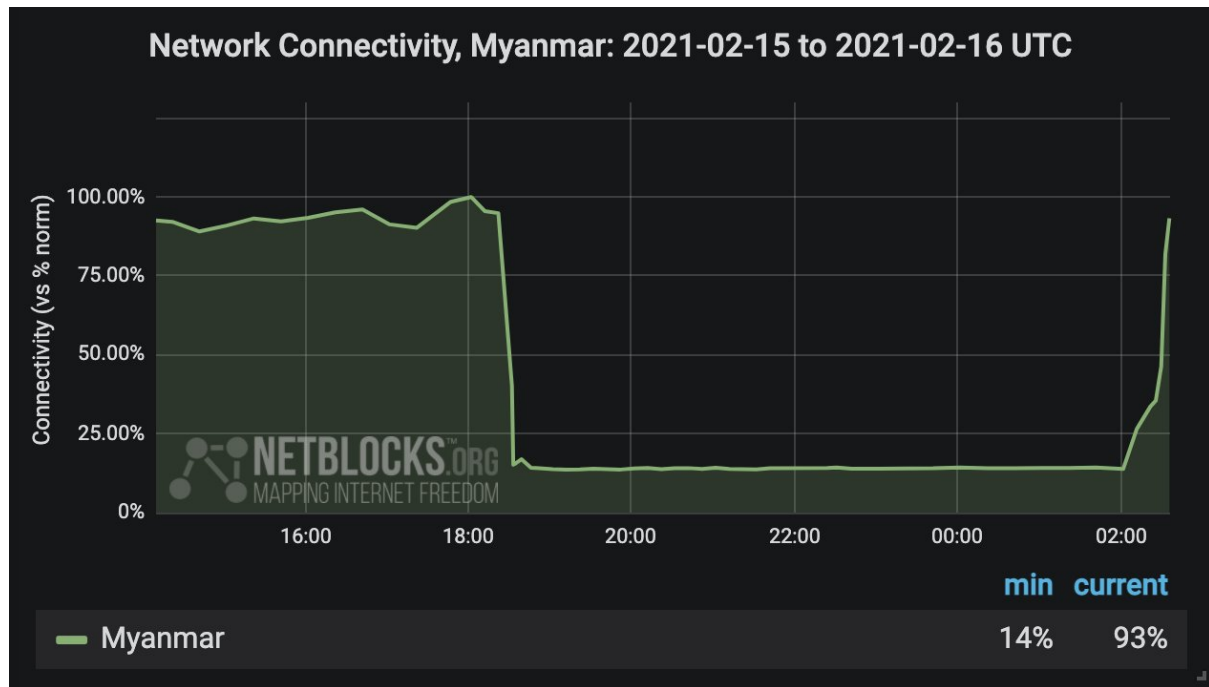
Figure 2: Internet connectivity, Myanmar: February 15, 2022 to February 16, 2022 UTC

Findings of internet censorship in Myanmar

Open Observatory of Network Interference (OONI) is a software that monitors free and open internet disruptions to help by increasing transparency around internet censorship around the world. The measurements of internet censorship can be carried out by OONI Run and OONI Probe. The results of the measurements are recorded on OONI Explorer and the measurement consists of many different tests.

Web connectivity test is to measure whether websites are blocked by means of DNS tampering, TCP/IP blocking or by a transparent HTTP proxy. **Instant messaging** is to measure the reachability of WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Telegram, and Signal, within a tested network. **Circumvention** is to test the blocking of circumvention tools such as Psiphon, Tor or RiseupVPN. **Performance test** is to measure the speed and performance of the network by NDT (Network Diagnostic Test) and to measure video streaming performance by DASH (Dynamic Adaptive Streaming over HTTP). **Middleboxes** test consists of HTTP Invalid Request Line Test and HTTP Header Field Manipulation Test, to detect the presence of network components.

The test results of OONI measurements are determined by the indicators listed in Table 2. Table 3 shows the breakdown of OONI measurements on web connectivity, instant messaging and circumvention tools from January to June 2022.

Indicator	Description
■ ok_count	Successful measurements (i.e. no sign of internet censorship)
■ confirmed_count	Measurements from automatically confirmed blocked websites (e.g. a block page was served)
■ anamoly_count	Measurements that provided signs of potential blocking (however, false positives can occur)
■ failure_count	Failed experiments that should be discarded

Table 2. Indicators of OONI Measurements

OONI Test	ok_count	confirmed_count	anomaly_count	failure_count	measurement_count
Web connectivity test	668,881	1,473	74,711	7,953	753,018
	88.8%	0.2%	10%	1%	100%
Instant messaging					
Facebook Messenger	4,957	0	4,280	1	9,238
	54%	0%	46%	0%	100%
Signal	7,509		955	1	8,465
	89%	0%	11%	0%	100%
Telegram	8,625	0	618	1	9,244
	93%	0%	7%	0%	100%
WhatsApp	5,855	0	3,342	28	9,225
	63%	0%	36%	0%	100%
Circumvention Tools					
Psiphon	8,922	0	199	2	9,123
	98%	0%	2%	0%	100%
Tor	8,939	0	85	0	9,024
	99%	0%	1%	0%	100%

Table 3. The Breakdown of OONI Measurements for Various Tests

Blocking of Websites

The websites to be tested are distinguished into 30 categories.

During the first half-year of 2022, 753,018 OONI measurements were collected from 2,130 websites through 37 vantage points in Myanmar. From this total, it was seen that 88.8% (668,881) were OK, 9.9% (74,711) were anomalies, 1.1% (7,953) were failed measurements and 0.2% (1,473) were confirmed blockings.

Among those 2,130 websites, there are 112 blocked websites (5.26% of 2,130) of 11 categories with 1,473 blocking times through 6 vantage points from 6 internet service providers (ISPs). The ISPs blocking the websites are:

1. Frontiir Co., Ltd.

2. Myanmar Net

3. Global Technology Co., Ltd.

4. Atom Myanmar Ltd. (former Telenor Myanmar)

5. Fortune Telecom Co., Ltd.

6. Myanmar Information Highway Ltd.

The following chart illustrates the blocking of websites of 11 categories in Myanmar from January to June 2022, based on OONI data.
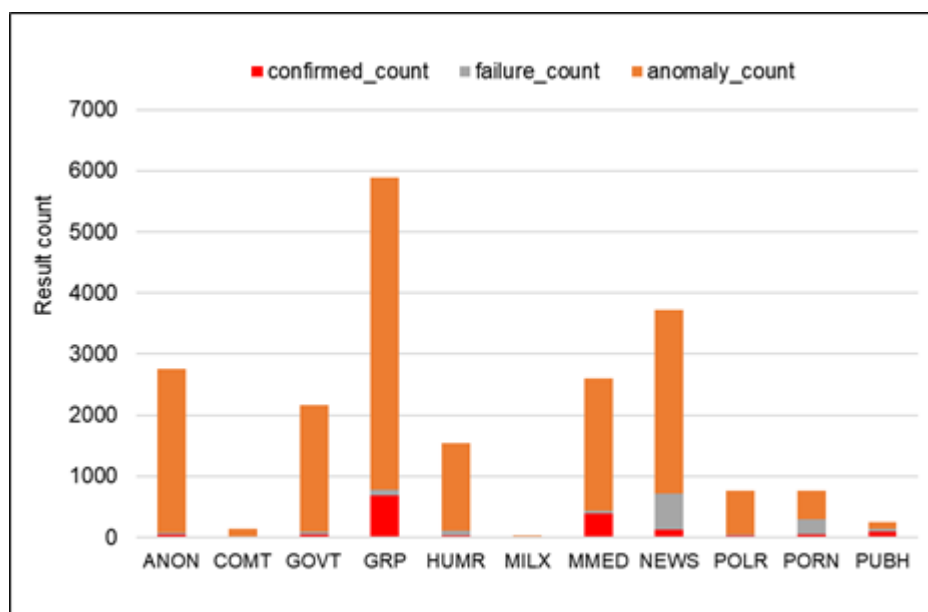
Figure 3. Websites categories with blocking counts

In order to filter out the false positives of the OONI measurement and to confirm the blocking fingerprints of the measurement, the heuristics analysis has also been applied to these 112 blocked websites from OONI measurements. The concepts of the heuristics are as follows:

1. Does the IP in question have a PTR record pointing to something that looks like a blockpage (eg. a hostname that is related to the ISP)?

2. What information can we get about the IP by doing a whois lookup?

3. Is the ASN of the IP the same as the network where the measurement was collected?

4. Do we get a valid TLS certificate for one of the domains in question when doing a TLS handshake and specifying the SNI?

The analysis confirms again that these 112 websites are blocked by ISPs with the use of blocking types such as DNS level interference and HTTP level interference.
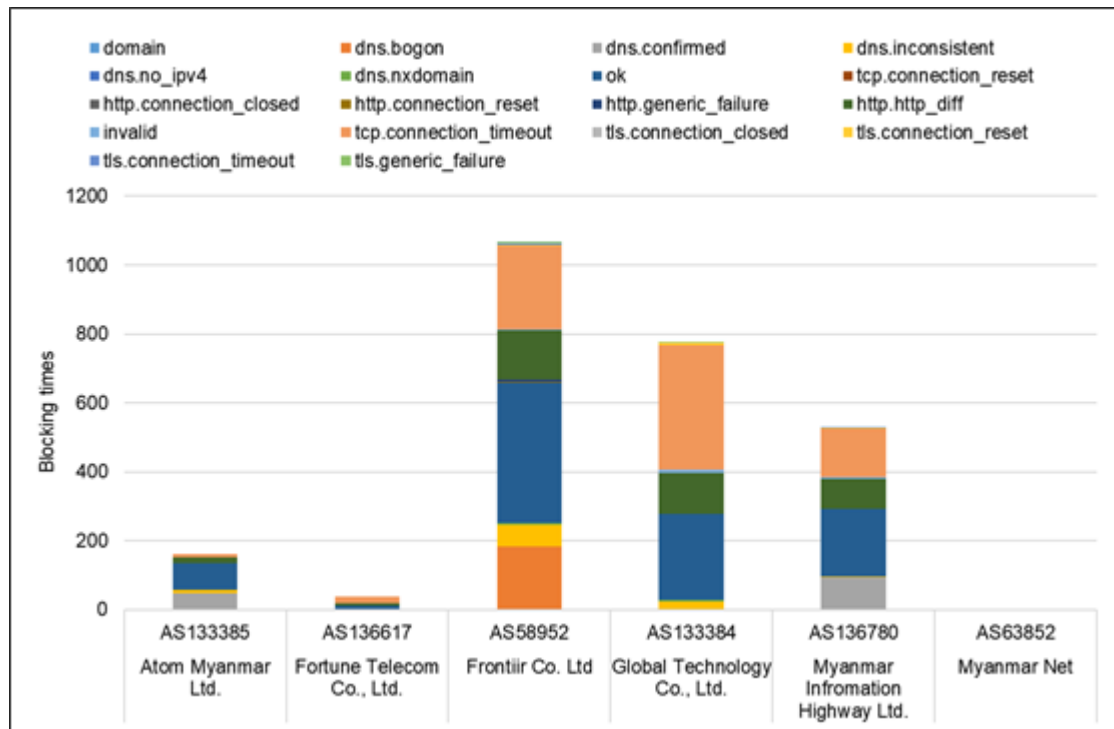
Figure 4. 6 ISPs blocked the websites during Jan to June 2022

According to the test results, News media websites are mainly blocked and secondly Pornography websites whereas Social networking websites are the ones with the largest blocking times of 683. Please see Table 5 and Figure 5 .

Item	Category of Blocked Websites	Category Code	Internet Service Providers (ISPs)	Number of Websites	Blocking Times
1	News Media	NEWS	Atom Myanmar Ltd., Global Technology Co., Ltd.	30	119
2	Pornography	PORN	Atom Myanmar Ltd.	20	48
3	Anonymization and circumvention tools	ANON	Atom Myanmar Ltd., Myanmar Information Highway Ltd.	15	41
4	Government	GOVT	Global Technology Co., Ltd., Atom Myanmar Ltd.	15	47

Item	Category of Blocked Websites	Category Code	Internet Service Providers (ISPs)	Number of Websites	Blocking Times
5	Social Networking	GRP	Frontiir Co. Ltd, Myanmar Net, Global Technology Co., Ltd., Atom Myanmar Ltd., Fortune Telecom Co., Ltd.	11	683
6	Human Rights Issues	HUMR	Global Technology Co., Ltd., Atom Myanmar Ltd., Fortune Telecom Co., Ltd.	8	34
7	Political Criticism	POLR	Global Technology Co., Ltd., Atom Myanmar Ltd.	7	27
8	Media sharing	MMED	Frontiir Co. Ltd, Myanmar Net, Atom Myanmar Ltd., Fortune Telecom Co., Ltd.	2	383
9	Public Health	PUBH	Frontiir Co. Ltd, Myanmar Net, Atom Myanmar Ltd.	2	88
10	Communication Tools	COMT	Atom Myanmar Ltd.	1	2
11	Terrorism and Militants	MILX	Atom Myanmar Ltd.	1	1
			Total	112	1473

Table 5. Blocked websites in Myanmar (Jan-June 2022)

Blocked Websites under Each Categories in Myanmar (Jan-June 2022)

- News Media — 27%
- Pornography — 18%
- Anonymization and circumvention tools — 13%
- Government — 13%
- Social Networking — 10%
- Human Rights Issues — 7%
- Political Criticism — 6%
- Media sharing — 2%
- Public Health — 2%
- Communication Tools — 1%
- Terrorism and Militants — 1%
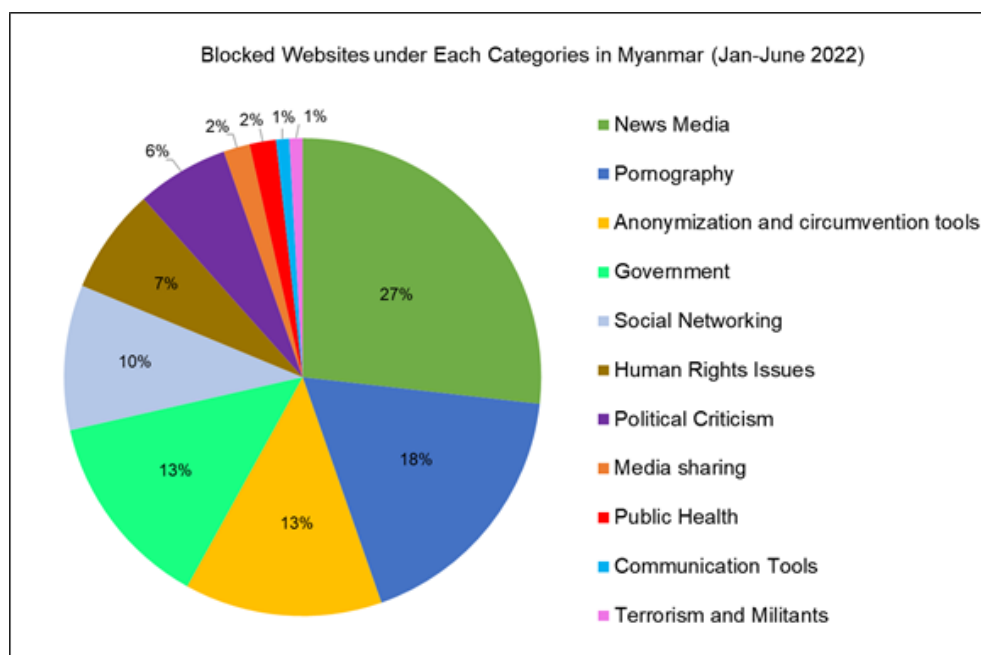
Figure 5. Breakdown of Blocked Websites under Categories

Blocking of News Media

During the first half of 2022, 30 websites of News Media were blocked by 2 ISPs: Atom Myanmar Ltd. with the network AS133385 and Global Technology Co., Ltd. with AS133384.
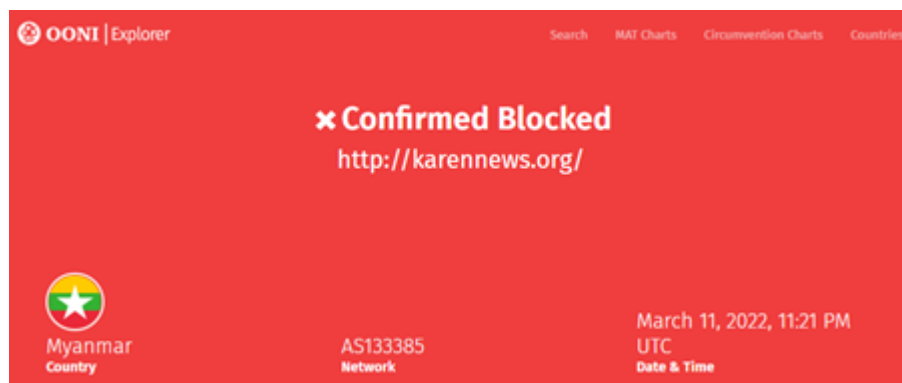
Figure 6. ISPs blocked News Media websites

Among the 30 News Media websites, we have selected 3 websites: http://karennews.org/,

https://rohingyakhobor.com/, and https://www.rohingyanewsbank.com/ for detailed findings of heuristics.

Karen News website is partly blocked by 2 ISPs with the use of DNS tempering and TCP/IP blocking (See Figure 7) but ISPs sometimes give the access in some days during the testing period (See Figure 8). The blocking times increase in May and June 2022.
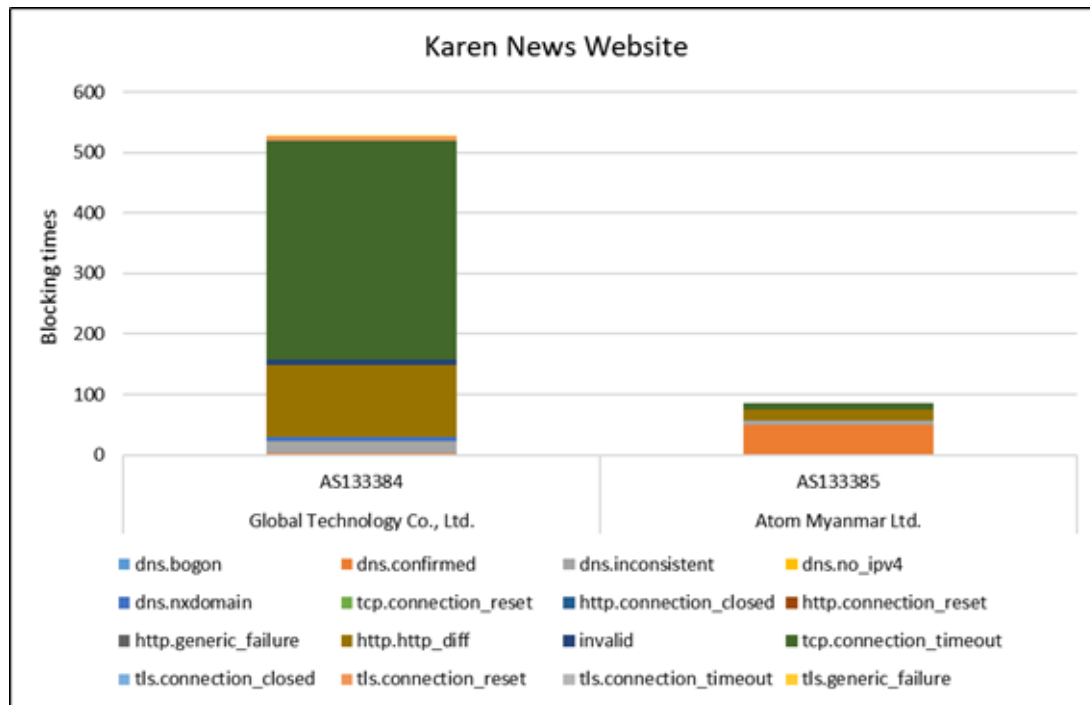
Figure 7. Karen News page blocked by ISPs
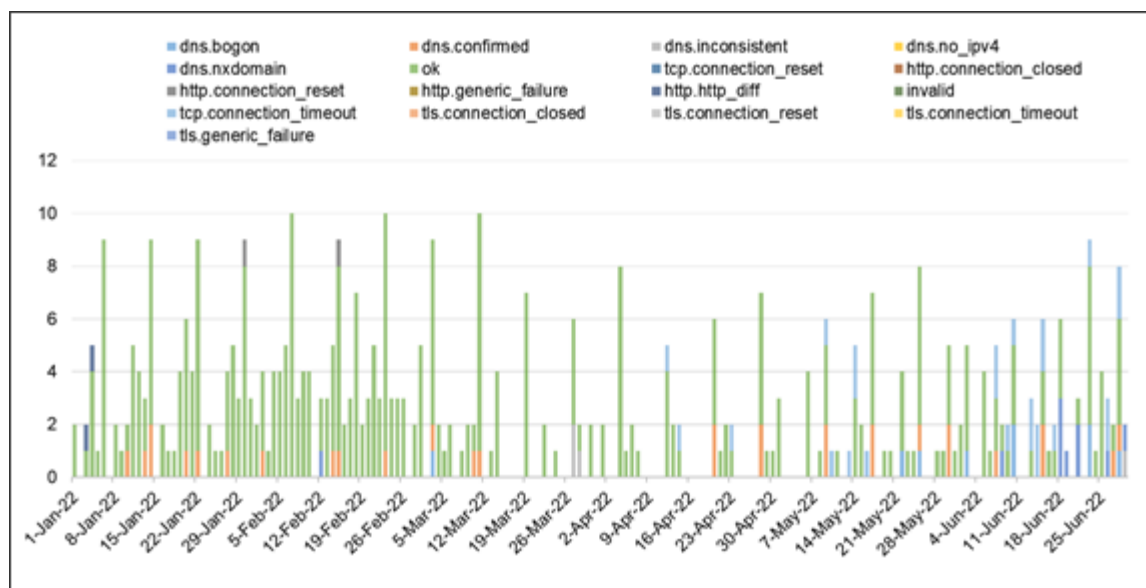
Figure 8. Measurements of Karen News page

The following charts describe that Rohingya Khobor and Rohingya News Bank sites are also blocked by DNS tempering (dns.confirmed) and TCP/IP blocking (tcp.connection_timeout) during the testing period and the websites are sometimes accessible.
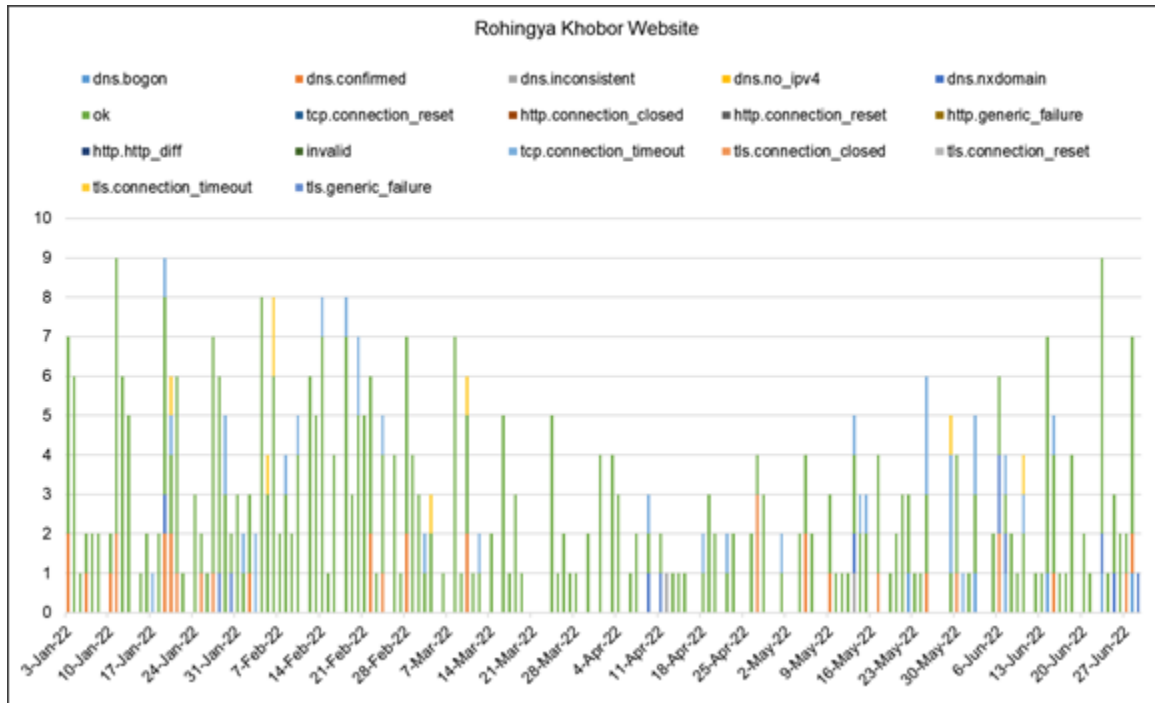
Figure 9. Measurements of Rohingya Khobor page
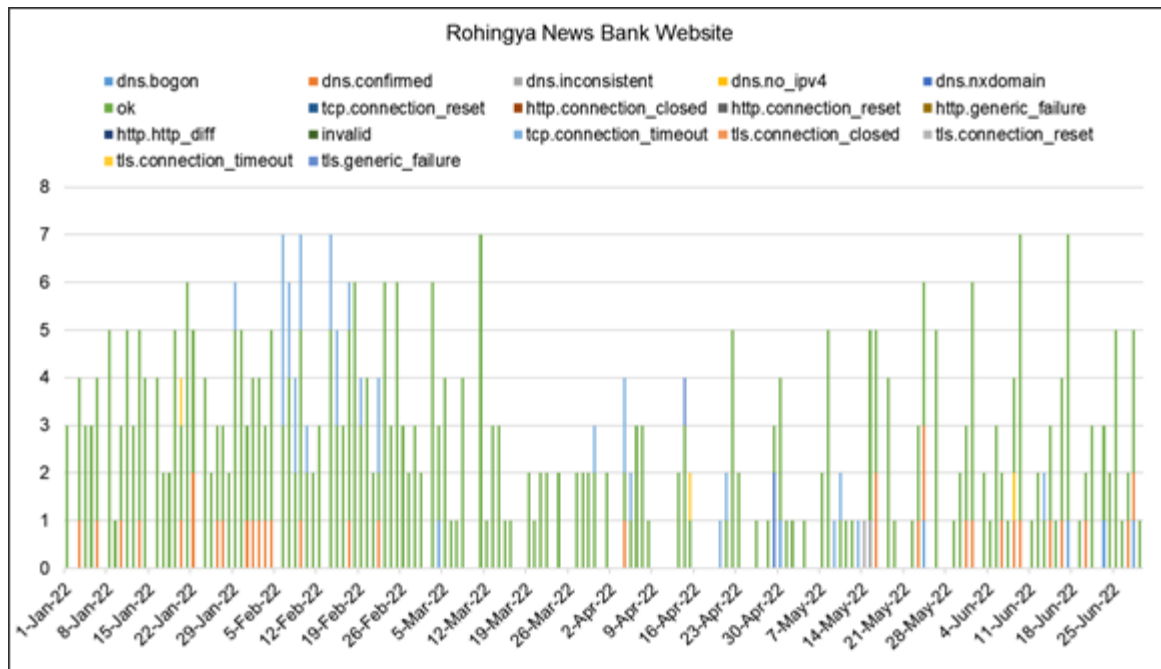
Figure 10. Measurements of Rohingya News Bank page

Blocking of Government Websites

In the case of blocking the government websites, the websites are referred to as those of CRPH (Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw) and NUG (National Unity Government). The State Administration Council (SAC), the country's ruling military junta, has

declared the NUG and CRPH illegal. This becomes the reason for blocking. Those 15 websites are blocked by 2 ISPs: Atom Myanmar Ltd. with the network AS133385 and Global Technology Co., Ltd. with AS133384. The following Table states the 15 blocked websites under Government categories with the blocking times from 2 vantage points of 2 ISPs.

| No.	Domain	Blocking Times	
		AS133385	AS133384
1	crphmyanmar.org	1	
2	gov.nugmyanmar.org	3	
3	mod.nugmyanmar.org	3	
4	moe.nugmyanmar.org	2	
5	mofa.nugmyanmar.org	3	
6	moh.nugmyanmar.org	5	1
7	mohadm.nugmyanmar.org	4	
8	mohai.nugmyanmar.org	3	
9	mohr.nugmyanmar.org	2	
10	moic.nugmyanmar.org	4	
11	mol.nugmyanmar.org	3	
12	monrec.nugmyanmar.org	3	
13	mopfi.nugmyanmar.org	3	
14	mowyca.nugmyanmar.org	3	
15	nugmyanmar.org	4	
	Total	46	1

Table 6. Blocked Websites under Government Categories

OONI measurements recorded the same 117 Government websites for each ISPs. Apart from those 15 sites, the others are accessible and sometimes likely blocked. The following charts describe the measurements on the government websites by 2 ISPs during the testing period.

Figure 11. Measurements on Government Websites from Global Technology Co., Ltd.
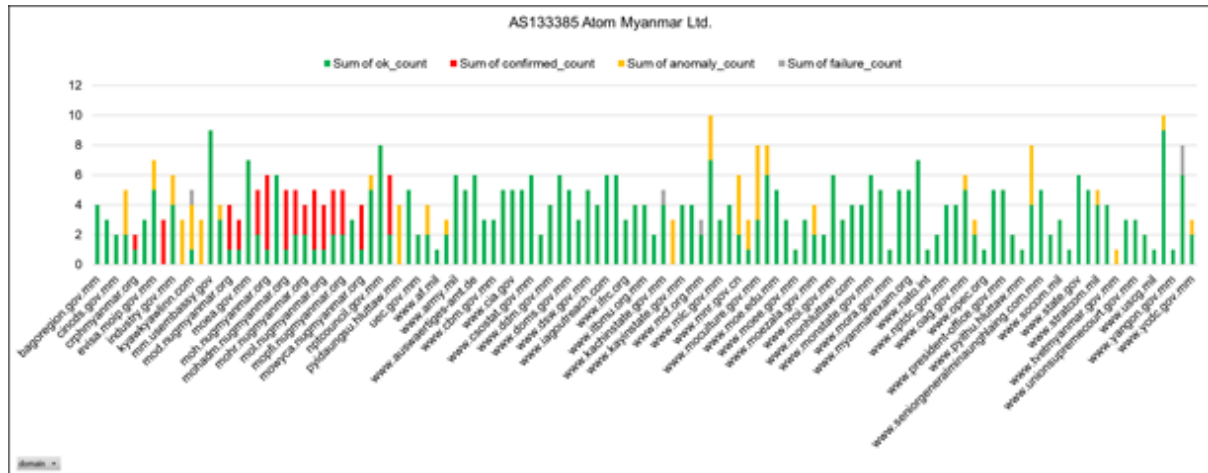
Figure 12. Measurements on Government Websites from Atom Myanmar Ltd.

Internet outages events

Internet access was apparently stable until Monday February 1, 2021 while the military regime took power, shutting down the entire internet connection approximately from 3:00 am Myanmar local time until 8:00 am. That was the first nationwide internet outage after a decade of digital transformation in which internet connectivity in Myanmar has fallen to 50% from ordinary levels reported by Netblocks (see Figure 13).[213] Then internet disruption repeatedly occurs in the year of 2021 (see the OONI previous report).[214]
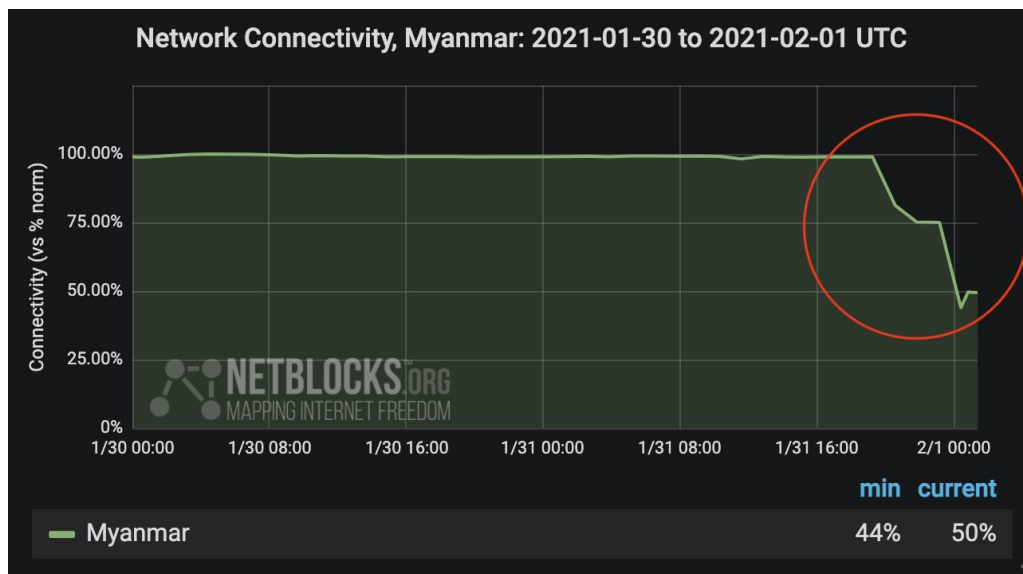
Figure 13: Network Connectivity: January 30, 2022 to February 1, 2022 UTC (Source: Netblocks)

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[213] Netblocks. (2021, January 31). *Internet disrupted in Myanmar amid apparent military uprising.* https://netblocks.org/reports/internet-disrupted-in-myanmar-amid-apparent-military-uprising-JBZrmlB6

[214] OONI et al. (2021). *Myanmar: Data on internet blocks and internet outages following military coup.* https://ooni.org/post/2021-myanmar-internet-blocks-and-outages/

In this finding, we utilized Internet Outage Detection and Analysis (IODA) and Google traffic data to observe internet connectivity outages in Myanmar. The Internet Outage Detection and Analysis (IODA) is a project to measure internet outages worldwide in near real-time. IODA uses four measurement[215] including google traffic[216] and inference methods to track and identify internet outages. IODA provides access to their measurements through their Dashboard, which allows users to explore internet outages with country, region, and AS level of granularity. In this observation, we show only two measurements (Routing (BGP), Active Probing) from the IODA dashboard and Google transparency report dashboard.
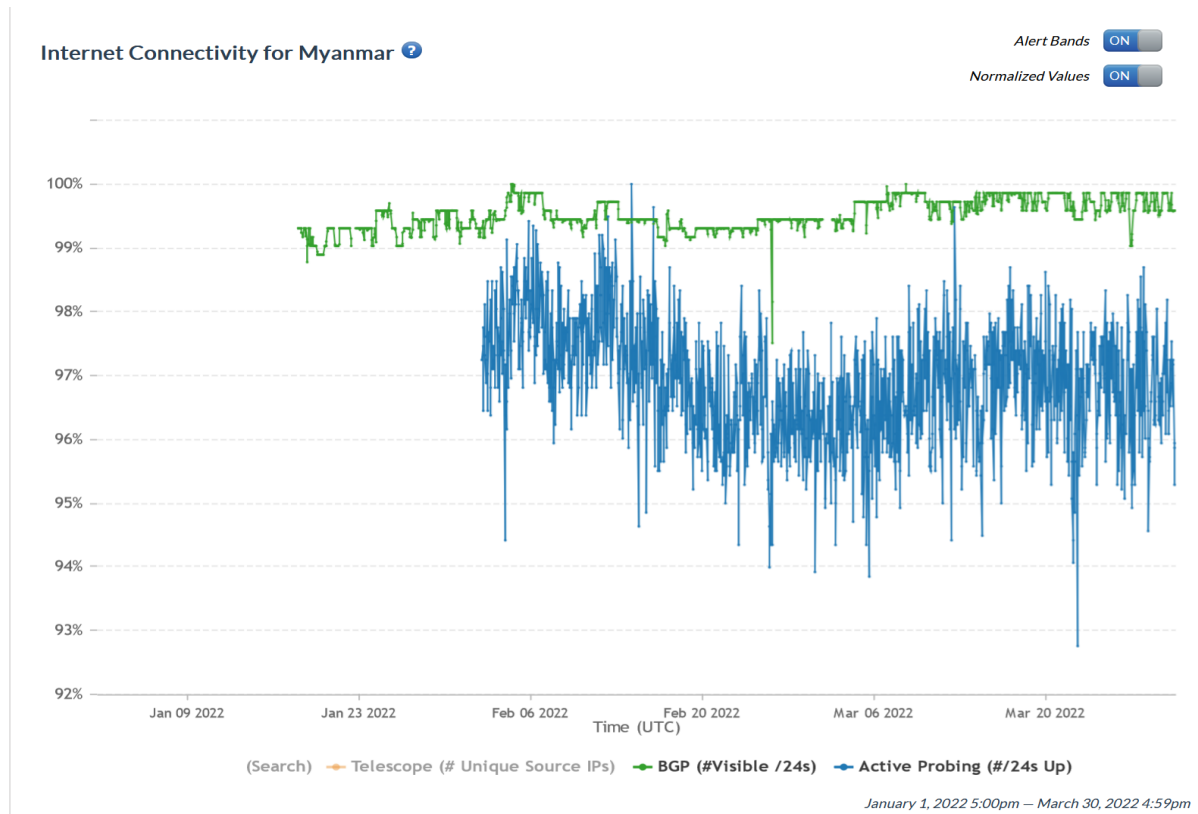
Figure 14: Internet connectivity status in Myanmar: January 01, 2022 to March 30, 2022 (IODA Dashboard, 2022)

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[215] Caida. (n.d.). *Internet outage detection and analysis (IODA)*. https://www.caida.org/projects/ioda/

[216] Google. (n.d.). *Traffic and disruptions to Google: Myanmar.* https://transparencyreport.google.com/traffic/overview?hl=en&fraction_traffic=start:1640995200000;end:1656547199999;product:19;region:MM&lu=fraction_traffic
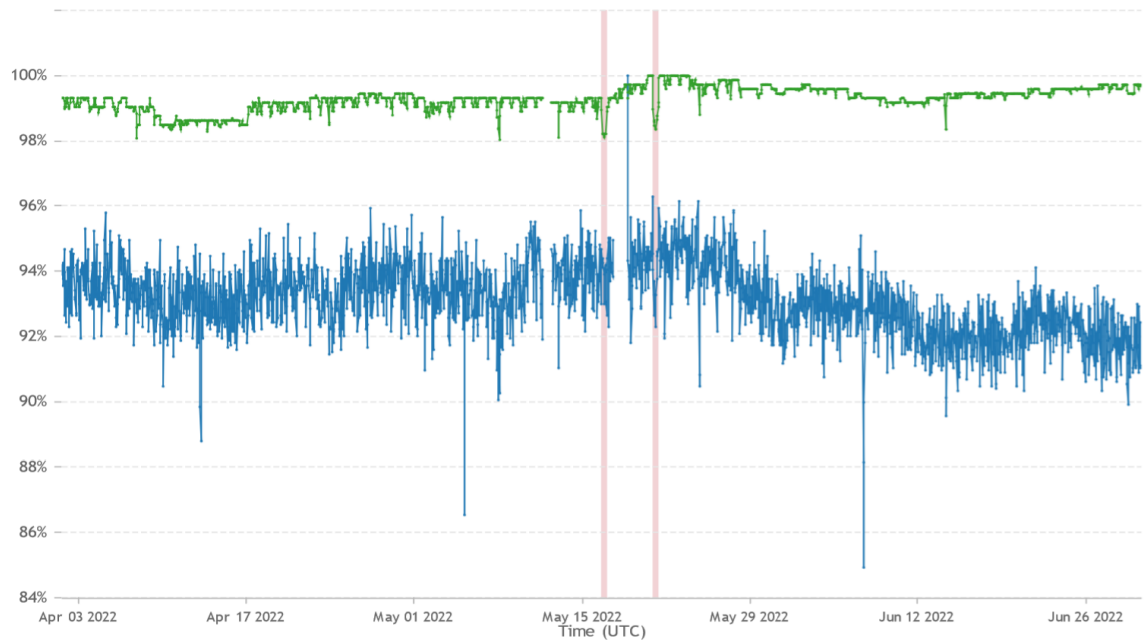
Figure 15: Internet connectivity status in Myanmar: April 01, 2022 to June 30, 2022 (IODA Dashboard, 2022)
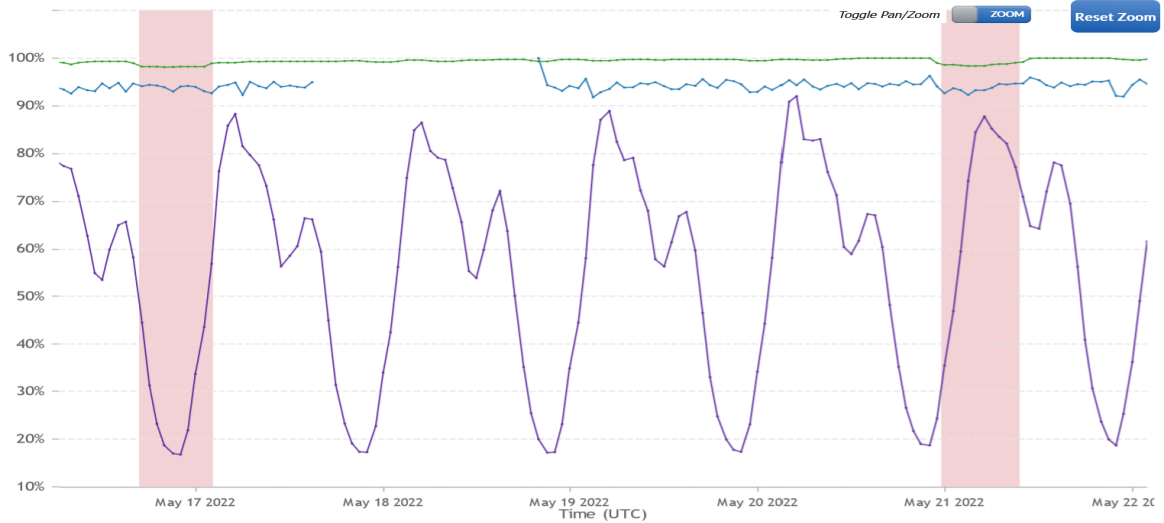
Figure 16: Internet connectivity alert in Myanmar: May 15, 2022 to May 21, 2022 (IODA Dashboard, 2022)

Start 🗓 **1/1/2022**　　End 🗓 **6/30/2022**
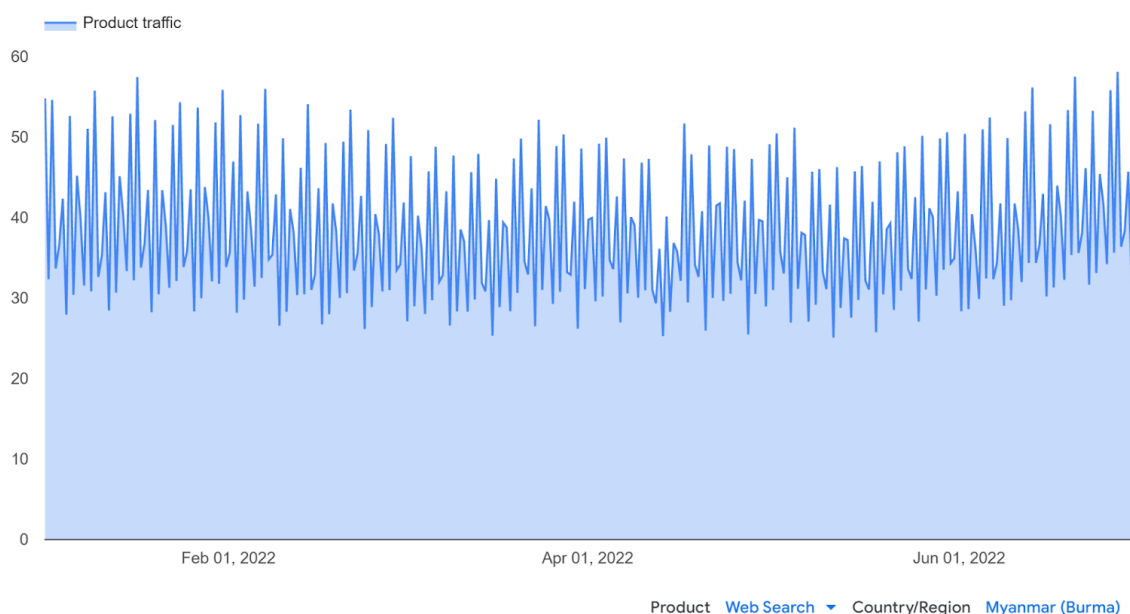
Figure 17: Internet connectivity status in Myanmar: January 01, 2022 to June 30, 2022 (Google Transparency Report, 2022)

According to public data source IODA and Google traffic data, there were no significant internet connectivity outages between January 1, and June 30, 2022. However, IODA detects that there was an alert of internet connectivity drop on May 16, 2022 and May 20, 2022 (as Figure 16 shown) measured by (Routing (BGP), Active Probing and Google traffic) that appear a sign of internet connectivity outages. In some ways, mobile and wifi internet outages occurred in some regions and states including Sagaing region especially in the conflict-zone due to electricity shortage and political conflict.[217]

Blocking of Instant Messaging Apps

In testing the blocking of Instant Messaging Apps, we can measure for Facebook Messenger, Signal, Telegram and WhatsApp.

OONI's Facebook Messenger test is to examine the reachability of Facebook Messenger within a tested network by a TCP connection and DNS lookup to Facebook's endpoints over the vantage point of the user. The blocking occurs if TCP connections to Facebook's endpoints fail or/and if DNS lookups to domains associated with Facebook do not resolve to IP addresses allocated to Facebook.

According to OONI's measurements, there were more than 90% anomalies across 3 ASNs (AS9988, AS139711 and AS141704). Hence it may be concluded that Facebook Messenger is likely blocked due to TCP connections failing by preventing the target IP from being reachable.

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[217] Engagemedia. (2022). *Myanmar Digital Coup Quarterly: May-July 2022.* https://engagemedia.org/2022/myanmar-digital-coup-quarterly-may-july-2022/
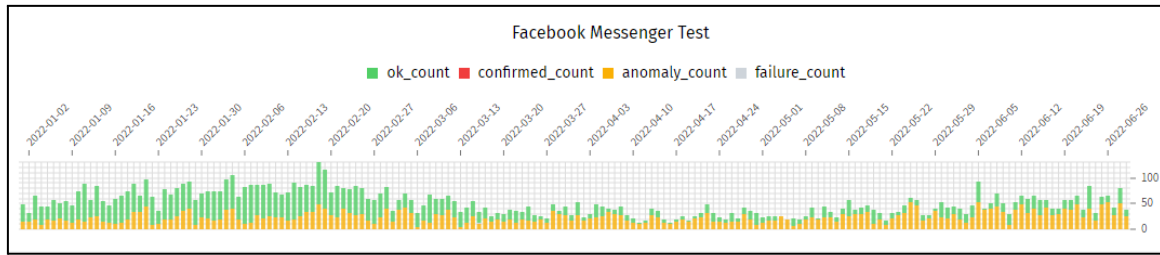
Figure 18. Measurement on Facebook Messenger

Signal Test is to measure the reachability of the Signal messaging app within a tested network. According to the OONI measurements from January to June 2022, most of Signal TestsTeat are found accessible. On the other hand, some results show the anomaly presenting signs of potential network interference.
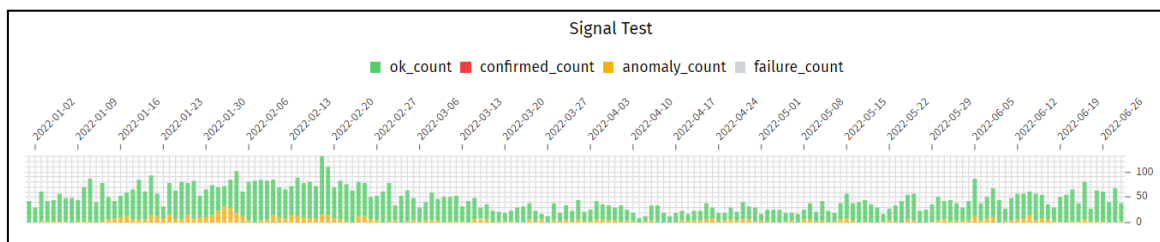
Figure 19. Measurement on Signal App

Telegram Test is to examine the reachability of Telegram's app and web version within a tested network. The below chart shows that almost all of Telegram tests reported continued access during the testing period. It is likely blocked in May and June 2022.
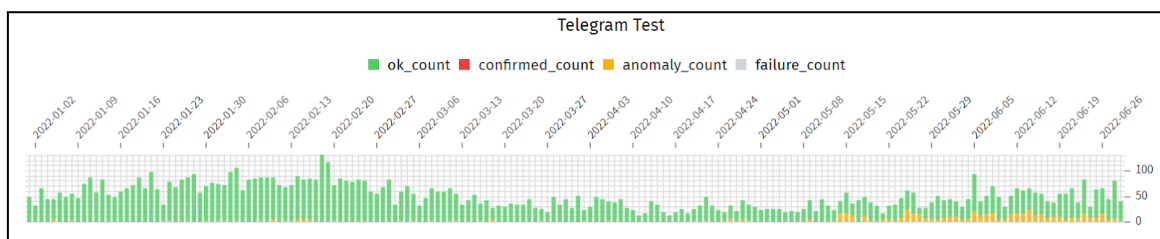
Figure 20. Measurement on Telegram App

WhatsApp Test is designed to examine the reachability of both WhatsApp's app and web version within a tested network. The measurements show that WhatsApp was accessible in Myanmar during the testing period but with signs of potential blocking on some vantage points.
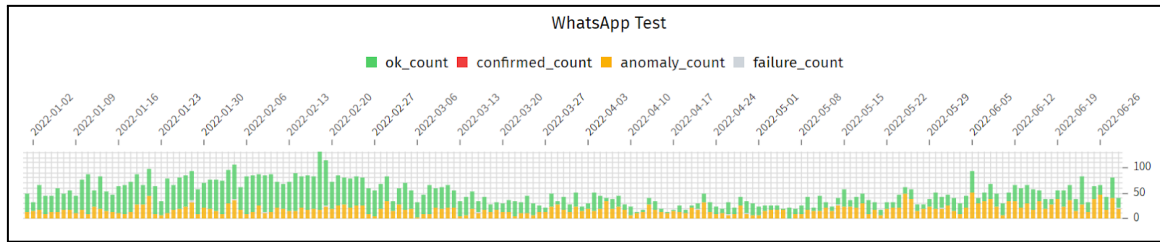
Figure 21. Measurement on WhatsApp

Blocking of Circumvention Tools

Psiphon is a free and open source tool that utilizes VPN, SSH, and HTTP proxy technology for censorship circumvention. The Psiphon VPN essentially serves as a tunnel that enables you to circumvent censorship. The OONI Probe Psiphon test provides an automated way of examining whether the Psiphon app works in a tested network. In almost the whole research period, Psiphon works in the tested network and can be used to circumvent internet censorship.
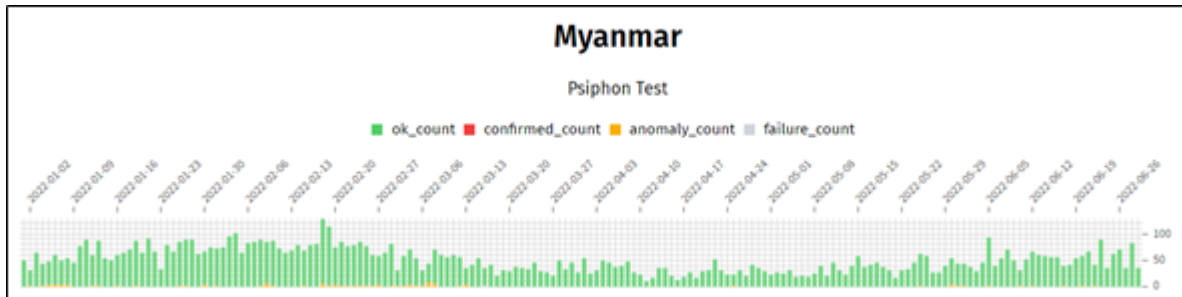
Figure 22. OONI data on the testing of Psiphon circumvention tool

Tor is a free and open software for anonymity, privacy, and censorship circumvention, and OONI Tor Test examines whether Tor works in a tested network. In Jan-June 2022, Tor was reachable in Myanmar.
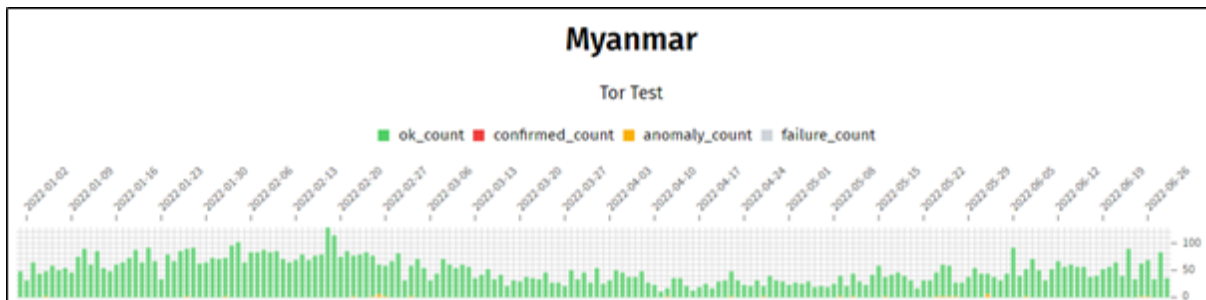
Figure 23. OONI data on the testing of Psiphon circumvention tool

Acknowledgement of Limitations

Through this study, various limitations were found, which could reflect on the internet censorship finding.

Firstly, the examination might not include sufficient test lists and measurements counts for this study period that could reflect the finding. After the coup, the military government highly restricted cyber users who could be threatened to run the OONI run and test lists with local vantage points in Myanmar.

Another limitation is unspecified categories. Within the study period, some blocked sites are detected that do not fall into any of the 30 categories. Thus, in this finding, only 112 websites that are categorized under the CitizenLab test lists are reported here in detail. The remaining blocked sites that are unspecified, are not reported in this report but included in a separate sheet in Annex MM-1.

Conclusion

The state of internet freedom was improved until the 2019 Rohingya crisis, and it went downhill after February 1, 2022, when the military regime took power in the country. Myanmar now became among one of the most censored countries in the world. The military took control of the telecommunication infrastructure, blocked social media platforms, and shut down the internet to increase its surveillance.

Consequently, multiple censorship events have been reported after the coup. In order to comprehend internet censorship, the independent researcher and iMAP team collected and analyzed network interference measurements between 1 January 2022 and 30 June 2022 to find out whether sites, instant messaging apps, and censorship circumvention tools were blocked or not.

Throughout OONI's study, it has been discovered that internet censorship has increased in Myanmar to a wider extent than ever before when comparing it to the 2017 report. According to 2022 OONI measurement analysis, 112 out of 2,130 websites within eleven categories in Myanmar are found as confirmed blocking sites by 6 local networks relating DNS and HTTP level interference. Among 112 websites under 11 categories, News media category is the category with the highest number of confirmed blocked websites, including ethnic independent News media http://karennews.org/ and https://www.rohingyanewsbank.com/ censored by way of DNS tempering and TCP/IP blocking. OONI detected 15 out of 117 government websites were confirmed blocking due to multiple government actors against one another. In addition to this finding, there was no sign of confirmed blocking of Instant Messaging Apps, however, Facebook messenger and WhatsApp were found to have a high number of anomalies during the tests, which could be concluded as confirmed blocking. During the test, circumvention tools such as Tor and Psiphon appear to be reachable across the Myanmar local networks where OONI tests were run.

Finally, in comparison to the data shown in Myanmar's report in 2017, which presented only five sites of TCP/IP and HTTP blocking, the state of internet censorship is showing a huge change by now with its significant increase and the decline of internet freedom.

References:

Xynou, M. (2021). *A multi-perspective view of Internet censorship in Myanmar.* OONI. https://ooni.org/post/2021-multiperspective-view-internet-censorship-myanmar/

Acknowledgements

Annex MM-1: Confirmed blockings

No.	Domain	Category Description	Confirmed by OONI	Confirmed by Heuristics
1	www.beer.com	Alcohol & Drugs	#N/A	TRUE
2	www.budweiser.com	Alcohol & Drugs	#N/A	TRUE
3	www.cannaweed.com	Alcohol & Drugs	#N/A	TRUE
4	anonymouse.org	Anonymization and circumvention tools	TRUE	TRUE
5	hola.org	Anonymization and circumvention tools	TRUE	TRUE
6	nordvpn.com	Anonymization and circumvention tools	TRUE	TRUE
7	ooni.torproject.org	Anonymization and circumvention tools	TRUE	TRUE
8	openvpn.net	Anonymization and circumvention tools	TRUE	TRUE
9	protonvpn.com	Anonymization and circumvention tools	TRUE	TRUE
10	speedify.com	Anonymization and circumvention tools	TRUE	TRUE
11	strongvpn.com	Anonymization and circumvention tools	TRUE	TRUE
12	surfshark.com	Anonymization and circumvention tools	TRUE	TRUE
13	www.hidemyass.com	Anonymization and circumvention tools	TRUE	TRUE
14	www.hotspotshield.com	Anonymization and circumvention tools	TRUE	TRUE
15	www.ipvanish.com	Anonymization and circumvention tools	TRUE	TRUE
16	www.megaproxy.com	Anonymization and circumvention tools	TRUE	TRUE
17	www.privateinternetaccess.com	Anonymization and circumvention tools	TRUE	TRUE
18	www.torproject.org	Anonymization and circumvention tools	TRUE	TRUE
19	opera.com	Communication Tools	TRUE	TRUE
20	adultfriendfinder.com	Online Dating	#N/A	TRUE
21	www.okcupid.com	Online Dating	#N/A	TRUE
22	www.gambling.com	Gambling	#N/A	TRUE
23	moh.nugmyanmar.org	Government	TRUE	TRUE
24	crphmyanmar.org	Government	TRUE	TRUE
25	gov.nugmyanmar.org	Government	TRUE	TRUE
26	mod.nugmyanmar.org	Government	TRUE	TRUE
27	moe.nugmyanmar.org	Government	TRUE	TRUE
28	mofa.nugmyanmar.org	Government	TRUE	TRUE
29	mohadm.nugmyanmar.org	Government	TRUE	TRUE
30	mohai.nugmyanmar.org	Government	TRUE	TRUE
31	mohr.nugmyanmar.org	Government	TRUE	TRUE
32	moic.nugmyanmar.org	Government	TRUE	TRUE
33	mol.nugmyanmar.org	Government	TRUE	TRUE
34	monrec.nugmyanmar.org	Government	TRUE	TRUE
35	mopfi.nugmyanmar.org	Government	TRUE	TRUE
36	mowyca.nugmyanmar.org	Government	TRUE	TRUE
37	nugmyanmar.org	Government	TRUE	TRUE
38	www.4chan.org	Social Networking	#N/A	TRUE
39	abs.twimg.com	Social Networking	TRUE	TRUE
40	edge-chat.instagram.com	Social Networking	TRUE	TRUE
41	external.xx.fbcdn.net	Social Networking	TRUE	TRUE
42	fbcdn.net	Social Networking	TRUE	TRUE

No.	Domain	Category Description	Confirmed by OONI	Confirmed by Heuristics
43	i.instagram.com	Social Networking	TRUE	TRUE
44	scontent.xx.fbcdn.net	Social Networking	TRUE	TRUE
45	static.xx.fbcdn.net	Social Networking	TRUE	TRUE
46	staticxx.facebook.com	Social Networking	TRUE	TRUE
47	upload.twitter.com	Social Networking	TRUE	TRUE
48	video.twimg.com	Social Networking	TRUE	TRUE
49	www.instagram.com	Social Networking	TRUE	TRUE
50	cultdeadcow.com	Hacking Tools	#N/A	TRUE
51	www.justiceformyanmar.org	Human Rights Issues	TRUE	TRUE
52	hiburma.net	Human Rights Issues	TRUE	TRUE
53	karen.kicnews.org	Human Rights Issues	TRUE	TRUE
54	kicnews.org	Human Rights Issues	TRUE	TRUE
55	progressivevoicemyanmar.org	Human Rights Issues	TRUE	TRUE
56	www.athanmyanmar.org	Human Rights Issues	TRUE	TRUE
57	www.bhrn.org.uk	Human Rights Issues	TRUE	TRUE
58	www.savemyanmar.org	Human Rights Issues	TRUE	TRUE
59	gaytoday.com	LGBT	#N/A	TRUE
60	www.facebook.com	LGBT	TRUE	TRUE
61	www.gaystarnews.com	LGBT	#N/A	TRUE
62	www.nifty.org	LGBT	#N/A	TRUE
63	www.samesexmarriage.ca	LGBT	#N/A	TRUE
64	www.arakanarmy.net	Terrorism and Militants	TRUE	TRUE
65	www.pslftnla.org	Terrorism and Militants	#N/A	TRUE
66	channelmyanmar.org	Media sharing	TRUE	TRUE
67	burmachannel.website	News Media	TRUE	TRUE
68	rohingyakhobor.com	News Media	TRUE	TRUE
69	7day.news	News Media	TRUE	TRUE
70	barnyarbarnyar.com	News Media	TRUE	TRUE
71	celemedia.club	News Media	TRUE	TRUE
72	facebook.com	News Media	TRUE	TRUE
73	karennews.org	News Media	TRUE	TRUE
74	maharmedianews.com	News Media	TRUE	TRUE
75	medicalsharing.website	News Media	TRUE	TRUE
76	mizzima.com	News Media	TRUE	TRUE
77	mmrednews.com	News Media	TRUE	TRUE
78	mrattkthu.com	News Media	TRUE	TRUE
79	myanmar-now.org	News Media	TRUE	TRUE
80	nenow.in	News Media	TRUE	TRUE
81	santhitsa.net	News Media	TRUE	TRUE
82	ssppssa.org	News Media	TRUE	TRUE
83	thatinhman.com	News Media	TRUE	TRUE
84	trend.lwinpyin.com	News Media	TRUE	TRUE
85	www.boommyanmar.com	News Media	TRUE	TRUE
86	www.dmgburmese.com	News Media	TRUE	TRUE
87	www.irrawaddy.com	News Media	TRUE	TRUE
88	www.m-mediagroup.com	News Media	TRUE	TRUE
89	www.mizzima.com	News Media	TRUE	TRUE
90	www.mizzimaburmese.com	News Media	TRUE	TRUE
91	www.narinjara.com	News Media	TRUE	TRUE
92	www.newsvsinformation.com	News Media	TRUE	TRUE
93	www.phothutaw.com	News Media	TRUE	TRUE
94	www.rohingyanewsbank.com	News Media	TRUE	TRUE
95	www.sbs.com.au	News Media	TRUE	TRUE
96	www.thestateless.com	News Media	TRUE	TRUE
97	www.thithtoolwin.com	News Media	TRUE	TRUE
98	mc.warnaing.website	News Media	#N/A	TRUE
99	tipsmyanmarnews.com	News Media	#N/A	TRUE
100	burmese.narinjara.com	News Media	#N/A	TRUE
101	nwayoomyanmar.com	Political Criticism	TRUE	TRUE

No.	Domain	Category Description	Confirmed by OONI	Confirmed by Heuristics
102	1221cd.org	Political Criticism	TRUE	TRUE
103	aungsanu.com	Political Criticism	TRUE	TRUE
104	burmacampaign.org.uk	Political Criticism	TRUE	TRUE
105	twitter.com	Political Criticism	TRUE	TRUE
106	www.cdmmyanmar.org	Political Criticism	TRUE	TRUE
107	www.isupportmyanmar.com	Political Criticism	TRUE	TRUE
108	www.mmcdm.org	Political Criticism	TRUE	TRUE
109	www.mmpeaceMonitor.org	Political Criticism	#N/A	TRUE
110	myporngay.com	Pornography	TRUE	TRUE
111	streetmeatasia.com	Pornography	#N/A	TRUE
112	www.asianthumbs.org	Pornography	#N/A	TRUE
113	www.bangkokstreetwhores.com	Pornography	#N/A	TRUE
114	www.freecamstars.com	Pornography	#N/A	TRUE
115	www.fuckingfreemovies.com	Pornography	#N/A	TRUE
116	www.indianporngirls.com	Pornography	#N/A	TRUE
117	www.seemygf.com	Pornography	TRUE	TRUE
118	www.sex.com	Pornography	#N/A	TRUE
119	www.thaichix.com	Pornography	#N/A	TRUE
120	www.thaicuties.com	Pornography	#N/A	TRUE
121	www.trueamateurs.com	Pornography	TRUE	TRUE
122	www.watchmyexgf.net	Pornography	TRUE	TRUE
123	www.wetplace.com	Pornography	#N/A	TRUE
124	www.xnxxsexmovies.com	Pornography	TRUE	TRUE
125	www.xvideos.com	Pornography	TRUE	TRUE
126	www.zzgays.com	Pornography	TRUE	TRUE
127	xhamster.com	Pornography	TRUE	TRUE
128	xxx4hindi.com	Pornography	TRUE	TRUE
129	arabxnxx.org	Pornography	TRUE	TRUE
130	bestfreetube.xxx	Pornography	TRUE	TRUE
131	join.allpornsitespass.com	Pornography	TRUE	TRUE
132	manporn.xxx	Pornography	TRUE	TRUE
133	spankbang.com	Pornography	TRUE	TRUE
134	theporndude.com	Pornography	TRUE	TRUE
135	www.indianpornvideo.org	Pornography	TRUE	TRUE
136	www.myanmar-porn.com	Pornography	TRUE	TRUE
137	www.pornhub.com	Pornography	TRUE	TRUE
138	www.whynotbi.com	Pornography	TRUE	TRUE
139	www.youporn.com	Pornography	TRUE	TRUE
140	xnxxx.cc	Pornography	TRUE	TRUE
141	dailyporn.club	Pornography	#N/A	TRUE
142	www.hotporntubes.com	Pornography	#N/A	TRUE
143	www.redtube.com	Pornography	#N/A	TRUE
144	www.xnxx.com	Pornography	#N/A	TRUE
145	www.youporngay.com	Pornography	#N/A	TRUE
146	panties.com	Provocative Attire	#N/A	TRUE
147	www.coquette.com	Provocative Attire	#N/A	TRUE
148	coronavirus-map.com	Public Health	TRUE	TRUE
149	coronavirus.app	Public Health	TRUE	TRUE
150	www.itsyoursexlife.com	Sex Education	#N/A	TRUE
151	www.positive.org	Sex Education	#N/A	TRUE
152	www.scarleteen.com	Sex Education	#N/A	TRUE
153	www.sexedlibrary.org	Sex Education	#N/A	TRUE
154	www.siecus.org	Sex Education	#N/A	TRUE
155	www.teenhealthfx.com	Sex Education	#N/A	TRUE
156	www.teensource.org	Sex Education	#N/A	TRUE
157	bravotube.net	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
158	www.grandonline.com	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
159	www.rotten.com	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
160	anybunny.tv	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
161	bestamateursporn.com	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE

No.	Domain	Category Description	Confirmed by OONI	Confirmed by Heuristics
162	fap18.net	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
163	hlatawtar.com	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
164	itechmedia.info	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
165	join.ddfnetwork.com	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
166	join.myallaccesspass.com	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
167	join.teamskeet.com	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
168	kalaykalar.com	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
169	landing.brazzersnetwork.com	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
170	landing.digitalplaygroundnetwork.com	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
171	landing.lookathernow.com	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
172	mmtimenews.com	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
173	mmtimespecialnews.com	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
174	naturalforfood.com	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
175	newporn.pro	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
176	pornprosnetwork.com	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
177	realthadin.com	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
178	secure.hustler.com	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
179	sexhay69.net	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
180	shweman.website	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
181	sportmyanmarnews.com	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
182	watch-my-gf.com	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
183	www.besthugecocks.com	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
184	www.bingoporno.com	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
185	www.bokepbarat.mobi	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
186	www.chitsakar.com	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
187	www.clips4sale.com	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
188	www.free-porn.info	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
189	www.freepornfull.com	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
190	www.fullxxxvideos.net	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
191	www.gayfuror.com	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
192	www.gaymaletube.com	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
193	www.gaytube.com	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
194	www.hotmovies.com	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
195	www.jennymovies.com	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
196	www.onlinelawka.com	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
197	www.pornmd.com	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
198	www.pornogratisdiario.com	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
199	www.pornoplus.fr	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
200	www.putainporno.com	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
201	www.tubegals.com	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
202	www.twitter.com	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
203	www.wicked.com	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
204	www.xnxx-pornos.com	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
205	www.xnxxgrey.com	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
206	www.xxxindianfilms.com	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
207	www.zteenporn.com	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
208	xnxx2020.net	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
209	xnxxhamster.co	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
210	xnxxvideoporn.com	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
211	xvideos5.com.br	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
212	xxnx.fun	Unclassified	TRUE	TRUE
213	www.altpenis.com	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
214	www.breastenlargementmagazine.com	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
215	africanporn.blog	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
216	alixnxx.org	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
217	alohatube.mobi	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
218	bangbros.com	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
219	boypornmovie.com	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
220	dailyxmovies.com	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE

No.	Domain	Category Description	Confirmed by OONI	Confirmed by Heuristics
221	desixnxx2.net	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
222	easyporn.xxx	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
223	gigaporn.xxx	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
224	hdxnxx.xxx	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
225	join.allofgfs.com	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
226	join.newsensations.com	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
227	kayatan.com	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
228	landing.babesnetwork.com	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
229	landing.mofosnetwork.com	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
230	landing.rk.com	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
231	megapornx.com	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
232	mmsportmyanmar.com	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
233	myitter.net	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
234	mzansi.porn	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
235	plusone8.com	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
236	pornmobile.online	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
237	premiumpornsites.com	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
238	razzwire.net	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
239	redporn.xxx	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
240	topmmnews.com	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
241	watchmygf.tv	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
242	wct.link	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
243	www.baise3x.com	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
244	www.bokep.space	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
245	www.filmpornofrancais.fr	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
246	www.fotosxxx.org	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
247	www.hornybank.com	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
248	www.ixxx.com	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
249	www.iyalc.com	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
250	www.japansex.me	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
251	www.joysporn.com	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
252	www.milfmovs.com	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
253	www.movieshark.com	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
254	www.mvideoporno.xxx	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
255	www.pornflixhd.com	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
256	www.puretaboo.com	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
257	www.sexstories.com	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
258	www.thumbzilla.com	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
259	www.tiava.com	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
260	www.videolucah.mobi	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
261	www.watchmygf.me	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
262	www.wetandpuffy.com	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
263	www.xmxx.kim	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
264	www.xnxx.fit	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
265	www.xnxxxvideos.net	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
266	xnxx-zoo.com	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
267	xnxx.guru	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
268	xnxx.kim	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
269	xnxx.porno333.com	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
270	xnxx.vip	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
271	xnxx1.net	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
272	xnxx1.org	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
273	xnxx123.net	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
274	xnxx2019.info	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
275	xnxxcomvideos.com	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
276	xnxxhd.red	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
277	xvideosporno.blog.br	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
278	xxnx.sex	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
279	xxxmoviesdownloads.com	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
280	xxxnxx.org	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE

No.	Domain	Category Description	Confirmed by OONI	Confirmed by Heuristics
281	xxxnxxx.live	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
282	zootube1.com	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
283	join.sensual-network.com	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
284	watchmygf.mobi	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
285	www.beeg.icu	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE
286	www.sexloving.net	Unclassified	#N/A	TRUE

Notes:

Website categories are based on the Citizen Lab test lists. If the websites are unclassified, it means that the website is not part of the test list. If the column 'Confirmed by OONI' shows "TRUE", it means that the website has been confirmed blocking by OONI based on current blocking fingerprints. If this column shows "#N/A" but the column 'Confirmed by Heuristics' shows "TRUE" the website has been only confirmed blocked through heuristics, which is further explained in Annex II. More metadata is also available to download here: https://github.com/Sinar/imap-data.

iMAP State of Internet Censorship Report 2022
COUNTRY: PHILIPPINES

By Katerina Francisco (EngageMedia), Khairil Zhafri (EngageMedia), Red Tan (EngageMedia),
Sara Pacia (EngageMedia), Vino Lucero (EngageMedia),
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Key Findings

- In recent years, and with the COVID-19 pandemic increasing people's reliance on digital technologies and with it the role of ICT regulators, agencies such as the NTC have come under fire for the "politicization" of the country's telecommunications sector.[218] This was most apparent under the administration of former president Rodrigo Duterte, whose six-year presidency was marred by the systematic undermining of democratic institutions and countless attacks against critical media and activists.
- In June 2022, before Duterte's term of office ended, the NTC ordered internet service providers to block 26 websites,[219] including news sites Bulatlat and Pinoy Weekly, allegedly over their ties to "communist-terrorist groups". The same month, news website Rappler was once again ordered to shut down after the Securities and Exchange Commission upheld its ruling to revoke the media company's operating licence.
- Despite this, OONI network measurement data collected from 23 ISPs confirms the blocking in the Philippines of 16 websites from 1 January 2022 to 30 June 2022. All websites were blocked through DNS hijacking. This number is one of the lowest among the countries covered in the study.
- The blocked websites are related to gambling, pornography, anonymization and circumvention tools, social networking, and alternative culture.
- No significant censorship was found during the testing of instant messaging apps and circumvention tools, with the exception of Psiphon which recorded high anomalies and should be investigated further.

Network landscape and internet penetration

Population: 109 million people[220]

Internet penetration rate: 72.7% in 2020[221]

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[218] Balinbin, A. L. (2020, July 8). Politicized media shutdown to drive away investors, says Fitch Solutions. BusinessWorld. https://www.bworldonline.com/editors-picks/2020/07/09/304153/politicized-media-shutdown-to-drive-away-investors-says-fitch-solutions/

[219] NTC orders block to access of websites of CPP-NPA, alternative media, progressive groups. (2022, June 22). CNN Philippines. https://www.cnnphilippines.com/news/2022/6/22/NSA-Esperon-website-block-CPP-NPA-media-groups.html

[220] Mapa, D. S. (2021, July 7). 2020 Census of Population and Housing (2020 CPH) Population Counts Declared Official by the President [Review of 2020 Census of Population and Housing (2020 CPH) Population Counts Declared Official by the President]. Psa.gov.ph; Philippine Statistics Authority. https:///content/2020-census-population-and-housing-2020-cph-population-counts-declared-official-president

[221] Internet user penetration in the Philippines from 2017 to 2020 with forecasts until 2026. (2021, December 13). Statista. https://www.statista.com/statistics/975072/internet-penetration-rate-in-the-philippines/

Mobile broadband: 149.6 subscriptions in 2020[222]

Fixed-line broadband: 7.9 million subscriptions in 2020[223]

Major ISPs:
- Globe: 79.7 million subscribers as of March 2022[224]
- PLDT Mobile/Smart: 71.8 million subscribers as of March 2022[225]
- Dito: 1 million subscribers as of June 2021[226]
- PLDT Home: 2.6 million subscribers as of March 2022[227]
- Converge: 1.8 million subscribers as of March 2022[228]

Most ISPs in the Philippines are publicly listed corporations. In March 2022, the government lifted the 40 per cent foreign ownership restriction allowing foreign investors to acquire controlling stakes in Philippine telecommunications and transport companies.[229] Singapore state-owned telco Singtel has minority ownership of Globe while Japanese government-linked NTT owns a significant stake in PLDT. China's state-owned telco China Telecom owns 40 per cent of the newcomer Dito Telecomunnity.

Political landscape

The Philippines' main regulatory body for the information and communications technology (ICT) industry is the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), established under the Aquino administration in 2016.[230] The department serves as the primary policy, planning, coordinating, implementing, and administrative entity of the government's executive branch in matters related to the national ICT development agenda. The DICT has three attached agencies: the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC), the National Privacy Commission (NPC), and the Cybercrime Investigation and

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[222] Mobile cellular subscriptions - Philippines. (n.d.). World Bank Open Data; The World Bank Group. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.CEL.SETS?locations=PH

[223] Fixed broadband subscriptions - Philippines. (n.d.). World Bank Open Data; The World Bank Group. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.CEL.SETS?locations=PH

[224] Rey, A. (2021, July 22). Telcos expect at least 1 million subscribers to move networks. RAPPLER. https://www.rappler.com/business/telecommunications-companies-expect-million-subscribers-move-networks/

[225] Ibid.

[226] Ibid.

[227] Cordero, T. (2022, May 25). PLDT Home eyes over 1M new fiber subscribers by end-2022. GMA News Online. https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/money/companies/832861/pldt-home-eyes-over-1m-new-fiber-subscribers-by-end-2022/story/

[228] Converge sustains subscriber growth with revenues up 40% in Q1 2022. (2022, May 16). Converge; Converge ICT Solutions. https://corporate.convergeict.com/news/converge-sustains-subscriber-growth-with-revenues-up-40-in-q1-2022/

[229] Venzon, C. (2022, March 22). Philippines allows foreigners to own telcos, airlines and railways. Nikkei Asia. https://asia.nikkei.com/Economy/Philippines-allows-foreigners-to-own-telcos-airlines-and-railways

[230] Tordecilla, K. (2016, May 23). Aquino signs law creating information, communications technology department. CNN Philippines. https://www.cnnphilippines.com/news/2016/05/23/Benigno-Aquino-III-DICT-Department-of-Information-and-Communications-Technology.html

Coordination Center (CICC). The Philippines' telecommunication regulatory environment, however, falls below international standards.[231] resulting in substandard outcomes such as high prices of mobile phone and internet services and low internet quality.[232]

In recent years, and with the COVID-19 pandemic increasing people's reliance on digital technologies and with it the role of ICT regulators, agencies such as the NTC have come under fire for the "politicization" of the country's telecommunications sector.[233]

This was most apparent under the administration of former president Rodrigo Duterte, whose six-year presidency was marred by the systematic undermining of democratic institutions and countless attacks against critical media and activists. Various investigative reports and academic studies have uncovered the existence of state-sponsored troll armies[234] polluting online discourse and targeting government critics. News websites and progressive groups critical of the government have been linked to the Philippines' communist insurgency, endangering the lives of journalists and activists.

One of the biggest blows to press freedom came in 2020, when the country's largest broadcaster, ABS-CBN, was forced to go off the air after pro-government lawmakers rejected its bid for a renewed franchise.[235] The NTC was a key player in the ABS-CBN issue, as it is the regulatory agency that has supervision and control over the country's telecommunications and broadcasting entities. Exercising its power, the NTC ordered the media giant to halt its television and radio broadcasting operations after its congressional franchise expired[236]. The move drew criticism, however, as the NTC order was deemed to be politicised amid the long-standing public feud between ABS-CBN and then-president Duterte.[237]

In June 2022, before Duterte's term of office ended, the NTC ordered internet service providers to block 26 websites,[238] including news sites Bulatlat and Pinoy Weekly, allegedly over their ties to "communist-terrorist groups". The same month, news website Rappler was

[231] Gov't think tank: PH telco regulatory environment weak. (2017, May 31). SunStar. https://www.sunstar.com.ph/article/145081/govt-think-tank-ph-telco-regulatory-environment-weak

[232] Fostering Competition in the Philippines: The Challenge of Restrictive Regulations. (2018). The World Bank. https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/478061551366290646/pdf/Fostering-Competition-in-the-Philippines-The-Challenge-of-Restrictive-Regulations.pdf

[233] Balinbin, A. L. (2020, July 8). Politicized media shutdown to drive away investors, says Fitch Solutions. BusinessWorld. https://www.bworldonline.com/editors-picks/2020/07/09/304153/politicized-media-shutdown-to-drive-away-investors-says-fitch-solutions/

[234] Curato, N., Ong, J. C., & Tapsell, R. (2019, August 9). The changing face of fake news. New Mandala. https://www.newmandala.org/disinformation/

[235] Duterte's congressional supporters seal Philippine network's fate | RSF. (2022, July 10). Rsf.org; Reporters Without Borders. https://rsf.org/en/duterte-s-congressional-supporters-seal-philippine-network-s-fate

[236] Rivas, R. (2020, May 5). NTC orders ABS-CBN to stop operations. Rappler. https://www.rappler.com/nation/259974-ntc-orders-abs-cbn-stop-operations-may-5-2020/

[237] Duterte won't allow ABS-CBN to operate even if it gets new franchise. (2021, February 8). CNN Philippines. https://www.cnnphilippines.com/news/2021/2/8/duterte-abs-cbn-franchise-license-to-operate.html

[238] NTC orders block to access of websites of CPP-NPA, alternative media, progressive groups. (2022, June 22). CNN Philippines. https://www.cnnphilippines.com/news/2022/6/22/NSA-Esperon-website-block-CPP-NPA-media-groups.html

once again ordered to shut down after the Securities and Exchange Commission upheld its ruling to revoke the media company's operating licence.

The current hostile attitude towards the press, attacks against critics, and use of disinformation strategies have facilitated a thriving environment for disinformation online. These, along with the complicity of Big Tech platforms, played a significant role in the electoral victory of incumbent president Ferdinand Marcos Jr, son of the late dictator who subjected the Philippines to martial law in the 1970s. Analysts have called the Marcoses' successful return to power as a victory for disinformation, with historical revisionism as the main narrative perpetuated in online spaces.[239] Marcos Jr was formally inaugurated as the 17th President of the Philippines on June 30, 2022, with a six-year term until June 2028.

Legal environment

Freedom of expression

Section 4, Article III of the 1987 Constitution guarantees freedom of speech.[240] Under the Duterte administration journalists and activists expressing views critical of the government were at heightened risk of being red-tagged or labelled as sympathisers of the communist insurgency. The National Task Force on Ending Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) is notorious for repeatedly red-tagging activists and government critics both through social media and official pronouncements.[241] The practice has resulted in the killings of numerous activists[242] while ordinary citizens have also been targeted,[243] most notably in April 2021 when organisers of community pantries were linked to rebel groups.

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government passed the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act which authorises the president to exercise emergency powers to ensure public order and safety.[244] One provision of the law, Section 6(f), drew criticism from rights groups as it penalises individuals or groups creating or spreading "false information" about the health crisis on social media and other platforms.[245] Within a month of its implementation, at

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[239] Salazar, C. (2022, May 8). Marcos leads presidential race amid massive disinformation. Pcij.org; Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism. https://pcij.org/article/8370/marcos-presidential-elections-massive-disinformation
[240] The Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines, article III, section 4 (1987). https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/constitutions/1987-constitution/
[241] Ranada, P. (2020, September 9). Lorraine Badoy's red-tagging causes suspension of PCOO 2021 budget hearing. Rappler. https://www.rappler.com/nation/lorraine-badoy-red-tagging-causes-suspension-of-pcoo-2021-budget-hearing/
[242] Philippines: End Deadly "Red-Tagging" of Activists. (2022, January 17). Human Rights Watch. https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/01/17/philippines-end-deadly-red-tagging-activists
[243] Maginhawa community pantry halts operations due to "red-tagging." (2021, April 20). CNN Philippines. https://www.cnnphilippines.com/news/2021/4/20/Maginhawa-community-pantry-halts-operations-red-tagging.html
[244] Bayanihan to Heal as One Act, (2022). https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2020/03/24/republic-act-no-11469/
[245] Patag, K. J. (2020, March 25). During state of emergency, "Bayanihan" Act allows imprisonment for "false information." Philstar.com.

least 47 people were apprehended for alleged violations.[246] The National Bureau of Investigation also issued summons to more than a dozen people for allegedly spreading false information,[247] including one who was targeted for his post on the alleged misuse of government funds.

Press freedom

Revised Penal Code

The guarantee for freedom of the press is provided for in the 1987 Constitution. In practice, however, journalists in the Philippines who are critical of politicians often face the threat of criminal defamation in carrying out their work. Libel laws are often used to harass, intimidate, and bully journalists who expose misconduct by public officials. The Revised Penal Code (RPC) provides for a prescription period of one year for libel, which upon conviction may result in imprisonment of up to six years and a fine of up to 6,000 pesos.

Cybercrime Prevention Act

The Cybercrime Prevention Act, passed in 2012, does not specify a prescription period for cyberlibel and since this law imposes a higher penalty for similar convictions than that in the RPC, the Department of Justice has interpreted the prescription period for the offence as 12 years.[248] The case of Maria Ressa and Reynaldo Santos Jr of the news website Rappler has become one of the most notable cyberlibel cases in recent years.[249] The charge against Ressa, Santos Jr, and Rappler and their subsequent conviction in 2020 drew criticism from local and international human rights organisations.[250] Similarly, in June 2022, a public official filed cyberlibel complaints – now dropped – against journalists from seven media outlets that reported on his involvement in a graft complaint.[251]

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https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2020/03/25/2003374/during-state-emergency-bayanihan-act-allows-imprisonment-false-information

[246] Joaquin, J. J. B., & Biana, H. T. (2020). Philippine crimes of dissent: Free speech in the time of COVID-19. Crime, Media, Culture: An International Journal, 17(1), 174165902094618. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741659020946181

[247] Torres-Tupas, T. (2020, April 2). NBI summons "more than a dozen" people over COVID-19 social media posts. Inquirer.net. https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1252807/nbi-summons-more-than-a-dozen-people-over-covid-19-social-media-posts

[248] Buan, L. (2019, February 14). DOJ: You can be sued for cyber libel within 12 years of publication. Rappler. https://www.rappler.com/nation/223517-doj-says-people-can-be-sued-cyber-libel-12-years-after-publication/

[249] Ratcliffe, R. (2020, June 15). Journalist Maria Ressa found guilty of "cyberlibel" in Philippines. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/15/maria-ressa-rappler-editor-found-guilty-of-cyber-libel-charges-in-philippines

[250] Regencia, T. (2020, June 15). Maria Ressa found guilty in blow to Philippines' press freedom. Www.aljazeera.com. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/6/15/maria-ressa-found-guilty-in-blow-to-philippines-press-freedom

[251] Cusi drops libel case vs. news orgs, journalists. (2022, June 24). CNN Philippines. https://www.cnnphilippines.com/news/2022/6/24/Cusi-drops-libel-case.html

Other Instruments

Politicians in the Philippines have also used other regulatory mechanisms to punish media organisations that give them unfavourable coverage. ABS-CBN, a major television and radio network, was forced to shut down in May 2020 after Congress members aligned to then-president Rodrigo Duterte denied the renewal of its broadcasting franchise which the network had held for 25 years.[252] In June 2022, just before the end of President Duterte's term, the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) ordered internet service providers to block 26 websites,[253] including news sites Bulatlat and Pinoy Weekly, over alleged ties to "communist-terrorist groups". The same month, Rappler was ordered to shut down after the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) upheld the ruling to revoke the media company's operating licence[254]. Similar political interference in the regulation of Philippine broadcasting media has also been reported in the past, most notably the NTC gag order at the height of the 'Hello, Garci' scandal in 2005.[255]

Access to information

Section 7, Article III of the 1987 Constitution recognises "the right of the people to information on matters of public concern". Section 28, Article II declares that "the state adopts and implements a policy of full public disclosure of all its transactions involving public interest". Even though the Philippine Congress has yet to pass comprehensive legislation on access to information, these constitutional principles have been the foundation for the right to access information in case law, most notably in the 1989 Supreme Court case of *Valmonte v Belmonte*.[256]

Executive Order No 2, s 2016

There have been a number of positive developments towards greater access to information in recent years. In July 2016, President Duterte signed the Freedom of Information Executive Order No 2, s 2016 which provides for the implementation of a freedom of information program within the executive branch under the purview of the Department of Justice and the Office of the Solicitor General. The executive order has had a knock-on effect on local government units across the Philippines with several of them passing their own freedom of information ordinances. The executive order has also renewed the pressure on Congress to

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[252] Reporters Without Borders. (2020, July 10). Duterte's congressional supporters seal Philippine network's fate. Rsf.org. https://rsf.org/en/duterte-s-congressional-supporters-seal-philippine-network-s-fate

[253] NTC orders block to access of websites of CPP-NPA, alternative media, progressive groups. (2022, June 22). CNN Philippines. https://www.cnnphilippines.com/news/2022/6/22/NSA-Esperon-website-block-CPP-NPA-media-groups.html

[254] TIMELINE: Rappler-SEC case. (2022, June 30). CNN Philippines. https://www.cnnphilippines.com/news/2022/6/30/Rappler-SEC-case-timeline.html

[255] International Federation of Journalists (IFJ). (2005, June 17). Anti-wiretapping law gags Filipino journalists, says IFJ. IFEX. https://ifex.org/anti-wiretapping-law-gags-filipino-journalists-says-ifj/

[256] Ricardo Valmonte & others v Feliciano Belmonte, Jr., (Supreme Court February 13, 1989). https://lawphil.net/judjuris/juri1989/feb1989/gr_74930_1989.html

pass the freedom of information bill that has been stalled since its earliest version was first tabled in the legislative body in the mid-1990s.[257]

Privacy

Data Privacy Act 2012

The Data Privacy Act 2012, which provides for the protection of personal data in the Philippines, came into effect in September 2016 after the establishment of the National Privacy Commission (NPC) and the promulgation of implementing rules and regulations of the Act.

The law covers the rights of individuals and the obligations of organisations with regard to the collection, storage, use, disclosure, retention, and disposal of personal data.[258] It also sets out penalties for violation of data protection law including fines of 100,000 to 5 million pesos, imprisonment from 6 months to 7 years, and if applicable, disqualification from public office. The law has extraterritorial application when the data subject is a Philippine resident or the data processor is an entity with links to the Philippines.

State surveillance

Section 3, Article II of the 1987 Constitution states that the "privacy of communication and correspondence shall be inviolable except upon lawful order of the court". Article 23 of the Civil Code states that anyone who "directly or indirectly obstructs, defeats, violates or in any manner impedes or impairs [...] privacy of communication and correspondence" of another person shall be liable to damages while article 290 of the Revised Penal Code sets the criminal liability for the unlawful discovery of secrets through the "seizure of correspondence".

Even though the Anti-Wiretapping Act generally prohibits wiretapping, the law has an exemption for "any peace officer [...] authorized by a written order of the Court" to carry out surveillance of citizens[259]. The Anti-Terrorism Act 2020 provides for the use of surveillance of any kind and by any means in the case of suspected terrorism for up to 60 days, extendable up to 30 days, with a written order of the Court of Appeals[260]. The Cybercrime Prevention Act 2012 allows authorities to intercept network communications and collect all data except the content and identity of the parties[261].

[257] Gita-Carlos, R. A. (2022, April 2). Pass FOI bill now, Palace urges Congress. Philippine News Agency. https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1171276

[258] Data Privacy Act, (2012). https://www.privacy.gov.ph/data-privacy-act/

[259] An Act to Prohibit and Penalize Wire Tapping and Other Related Violations of the Privacy of Communication, and for Other Purposes, (1965). https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra1965/ra_4200_1965.html

[260] Anti-Terrorism Act, (2020). https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2020/07/03/republic-act-no-11479/

[261] Cybercrime Prevention Act, (2011). https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2012/09/12/republic-act-no-10175/

In February 2018, the media reported the British government having sold £150,000 worth of hi-tech surveillance equipment at the height of President Duterte's war on drugs.[262]

Pornography

Unlike in its neighbouring countries, pornography is not outlawed in the Philippines. However, article 201 of the Revised Penal Code provides for offences relating to immoral doctrines, obscene publications, and obscene exhibitions.

In recent years, the Philippine government and civil society have worked against commercial sexual exploitation of children including child pornography. Anti-Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children (OSAEC) Act, which lapsed into law in July 2022, imposes a set of new duties and obligations on social media platforms, electronic service providers, internet and financial intermediaries to prevent child pornography.[263] This is on top of the Anti-Child Pornography Act 2009 which has already defined the offence, set out the punishments for it, and provided for powers of the internet regulator in handling child pornography.[264]

Cases of internet censorship and surveillance

In June 2022, outgoing National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr. requested the NTC to block access to 28 websites allegedly linked to "communist-terrorist" groups, using the Anti-Terrorism law as a legal basis.[265] Among the sites that Esperon requested blocked were those of alternative and independent news organisations Bulatlat and Pinoy Weekly, and progressive groups Save Our Schools Network, Rural Missionaries of the Philippines, Pamalakaya Pilipinas, and BAYAN.

In the months leading up to the May 2022 elections, there have been a spate of distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks against the websites of news outlets, fact-checking websites, and opposition politicians.[266] News websites ABS-CBN News, Rappler, and Vera Files reported a string of cyberattacks in December 2021 which coincided with political news coverage,[267] and in February 2022 the CNN Philippines website went down while the network was hosting a presidential debate.[268] The attacks, which periodically forced the sites

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[262] Ellis-Petersen, H. (2018, February 21). Britain sold spying gear to Philippines despite Duterte's brutal drugs war. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/feb/21/britain-sold-spying-gear-to-philippines-despite-dutertes-brutal-drugs-war

[263] Moaje, M. (2022, August 4). Internet now safer for kids with anti-online sexual abuse law. Philippine News Agency. https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1180657

[264] Anti-Child Pornography Act, (2009). https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2009/ra_9775_2009.html

[265] Buan, L. (2022, June 22). Esperon uses anti-terror law to block websites including news site. Rappler. https://www.rappler.com/nation/esperon-uses-anti-terror-law-block-access-progressive-websites-including-news-organization/

[266] Guest, P. (2022, April 26). "It's like being under siege": How DDoS became a censorship tool. Rest of World. https://restofworld.org/2022/blackouts-ddos/

[267] Three Philippine media outlets face latest in a string of cyberattacks. (2022, February 1). Committee to Protect Journalists. https://cpj.org/2022/02/three-philippine-media-outlets-string-of-cyberattacks/

[268] Philippines: CNN Philippines hit by cyberattack during presidential debate. (2022, March 4). International Federation of Journalists (IFJ).

offline, escalated in severity in the months leading up to the polls and appeared to be coordinated.[269]

Examining internet censorship in the Philippines

Findings

As part of this study, network measurements were collected through OONI Probe software tests performed across a total of 23 different ISPs in the Philippines from 1 January 2022 to 30 June 2022.

Blocked websites

Several websites were found to be blocked in the Philippines as part of this study. Analysis of the network measurement data collected through OONI Probe Web Connectivity tests of 2,002 websites performed across 23 ISPs did not find any confirmed blocking of websites by Philippine ISPs. However, heuristic analysis of the measurement data found that 16 websites were blocked by Philippine ISPs through DNS hijacking.

The blocked websites fall under the following categories: gambling, pornography, anonymization and circumvention tools, social networking, and culture.

The table below illustrates the distribution of websites that were confirmed to be blocked in the Philippines by category as part of this study from 1 January 2022 to 30 June 2022.

Category		Blocked Websites	OONI Probe Measurements
GMB	Gambling	7	4,745
PORN	Pornography	6	8,228
ANON	Anonymization and circumvention tools	1	21,975
GRP	Social Networking	1	21,156
CULTR	Culture	1	18,394
NEWS	News Media	–	54,840
HUMR	Human Rights Issues	–	33,150
LGBT	LGBT	–	25,065
COMT	Communication Tools	–	23,621

https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/category/press-releases/article/philippines-cnn-philippines-hit-by-cyberattack-during-presidential-debate.html
[269] Mendoza, G. B. (2021, December 24). Heightened DDoS attacks target critical media. Rappler. https://www.rappler.com/technology/cyberattacks-abs-cbn-rappler-vera-files-similar-signatures/

Category		Blocked Websites	OONI Probe Measurements
HOST	Hosting and Blogging Platforms	–	19,165
MMED	Media sharing	–	14,099
REL	Religion	–	11,593
PUBH	Public Health	–	10,530
ENV	Environment	–	8,730
POLR	Political Criticism	–	8,627
DATE	Online Dating	–	5,667
SRCH	Search Engines	–	5,487
FILE	File-sharing	–	4,926
XED	Sex Education	–	4,572
GOVT	Government	–	4,512
HACK	Hacking Tools	–	4,190
CTRL	Control content	–	4,128
ALDR	Alcohol & Drugs	–	3,418
ECON	Economics	–	2,819
COMM	E-commerce	–	2,208
GAME	Gaming	–	2,193
PROV	Provocative Attire	–	2,096
Aggregate		**16**	**333,328**

Gambling

Seven gambling websites were found to be blocked in the Philippines during the testing period of 1 January 2022 until 30 June 2022. Even though OONI Probe measurements did not find any evidence of a block, it could be confirmed through heuristic analysis.

Websites	Measured	Not Blocked	Anomalous	Failed
www.pokerstars.com	128	105 (82.03%)	23 (17.97%)	–
www.888casino.com	131	109 (83.21%)	22 (16.79%)	–
www.betfair.com	130	107 (82.31%)	23 (17.69%)	–
www.casino.com	97	96 (98.97%)	1 (1.03%)	–
www.goldenpalace.com	28	18 (64.29%)	10 (35.71%)	–
www.partypoker.com	128	106 (82.81%)	22 (17.19%)	–

Websites	Measured	Not Blocked	Anomalous	Failed
www.pokerroom.com	92	90 (97.83%)	2 (2.17%)	–

Pornography

Six pornography websites were found to be blocked in the Philippines during the testing period of 1 January 2022 until 30 June 2022. All were confirmed blocked through heuristic analysis as the OONI Probe measurements did not return any evidence of a block.

Websites	Measured	Not Blocked	Anomalous	Failed
deviantclip.com	130	108 (83.08%)	22 (16.92%)	–
jizzhut.com	130	112 (86.15%)	18 (13.85%)	–
motherless.com	130	102 (78.46%)	28 (21.54%)	–
porn.com	130	109 (83.85%)	21 (16.15%)	–
xhamster.com	134	109 (81.34%)	25 (18.66%)	–
xnxx.com	132	105 (79.55%)	27 (20.45%)	–

Anonymization and circumvention tools

Only one website that provides anonymization and circumvention tools was blocked in the Philippines during the testing period of 1 January 2022 until 30 June 2022. This website helps internet users anonymize the HTTP referer of the URLs that they visit online. The blocking was confirmed through heuristic analysis rather than OONI Probe measurement data.

Websites	Measured	Not Blocked	Anomalous	Failed
anonym.to	211	168 (79.62%)	39 (18.48%)	4 (1.9%)

Social networking

Only one social networking website was confirmed blocked in the Philippines during the testing period from 1 January 2022 until 30 June 2022. The website provides analytics of trending topics on Twitter. Even though OONI Probe measurements did not return any evidence of a block, the heuristic analysis performed could confirm blocking.

Websites	Measured	Not Blocked	Anomalous	Failed
www.trendsmap.com	262	225 (85.88%)	36 (13.74%)	1 (0.38%)

Culture

Only one website that fall in the culture category was found to be blocked in the Philippines during the testing period of 1 January 2022 until 30 June 2022. The blocking was confirmed through heuristic analysis as the OONI Probe measurement data did not find any evidence of a block. The blocked website hosts erotic literature contributed by its users.

Websites	Measured	Not Blocked	Anomalous	Failed
www.asstr.org	143	121 (84.62%)	22 (15.38%)	–

Instant messaging and circumvention tools

The OONI Probe measurements examining the reachability of instant messaging services and circumvention tools did not find any evidence of network tempering of Facebook Messenger, Telegram, Signal, WhatsApp, Psiphon, and Tor throughout the testing period. However, the Psiphon test found a significant level of anomalies (over 97 per cent) during the testing period which should be investigated further to rule out any network tempering in the Philippines.

Tests	Measured	Blocked	Not Blocked	Anomalous	Failed	ISPs
Facebook Messenger	5,169	–	5,142 (99.48%)	18 (0.35%)	9 (0.17%)	21
Telegram	5,180	–	5,134 (99.11%)	37 (0.71%)	9 (0.17%)	21
Signal	5,145	–	4,946 (96.13%)	192 (3.73%)	7 (0.14%)	21
WhatsApp	5,159	–	5,071 (98.29%)	35 (0.68%)	53 (1.03%)	21
Psiphon	5,241	–	127 (2.42%)	5,091 (97.14%)	23 (0.44%)	23
Tor	5,181	–	5,171 (99.81%)	10 (0.19%)	–	23
Tor Snowflake	120	–	107 (89.17%)	13 (10.83%)	–	14

Acknowledgement of limitations

	January	February	March	April	May	June	Aggregate
Measured	68,467	44,902	72,351	60,839	68,148	75,539	390,246
Hostnames	1,856	1,861	1,810	1,759	1,742	1,759	2,002
ASNs	13	12	12	19	11	10	23

Summary of OONI Probe Web Connectivity measurement data for the Philippines from 1 January until 30 Jun 2022

During the testing period from 1 January 2022 until 30 June 2022, more than 390,000 web connectivity measurements in the Philippines were collected using the OONI Probe. The web connectivity measurements could not confirm any blocking by ISPs. However, a number of blocked websites could be confirmed through heuristic analysis.

Another limitation of this study is the number and types of websites included in the OONI Probe measurements. A total of 2,002 websites were tested during the six-month period but the number of different websites tested varies when compared month-to-month ranging from 1,742 to 1,861 websites. While the low variance indicates a good coverage of websites tested across the testing period, a number of limitations should be taken into account.

The global and country test lists contain a very small sample of URLs that may be visited by Philippine internet users. Testing web connectivity using the test lists is thus not representative of the whole internet in the Philippines. Some URLs included in the test lists could be outdated, miscategorised, or belonged to multiple categories which may have resulted in skewed or varying interpretations of the measurement data.

The measurements collected are also limited by the number of different ISPs covered. In any given month, only 10 to 19 different ISPs are included in the measurement data as compared to 23 different ISPs covered for the whole testing period. The high variance between these figures indicates less than ideal ISP coverage of the measurement data. There may be Philippine ISPs not included in some measurements that would return confirmed blocking and thus limit the data analysis.

Despite these limitations, the measurement data from OONI Probe is useful in providing a broad indication of the general depth and breadth of internet censorship in the Philippines. Similar studies in the future may overcome some of these limitations by deploying OONI Probe on more devices, running a consistent number of tests periodically, and having wider coverage of ISPs across the Philippines.

Conclusion

During the reporting period, the Philippine government utilized a wide range of laws as grounds to restrict freedom of expression and opinion online. Media organizations critical of the Philippine government are consistently at the receiving end of these tactics, which have become commonplace under the term of former President Duterte. The use of cybercrime prevention and anti-terrorism laws to harass, intimidate, and bully Philippine journalists exacerbates the already hostile environment for the press, mired with violent practices like red tagging, enforced disappearance, and extrajudicial killings of media practitioners.

Specific to internet censorship, all 16 of the blocked websites were confirmed through further heuristic analysis based on measurements collected through OONI Probe. A comprehensive review of the country test list used in OONI Probe measurements could potentially improve the detection of network interference in the Philippines.

Further investigation is especially needed in anticipation of President Marcos Jr's expected continuation of his predecessor's censorship tactics and hardline stance against critics.

Marcos' camp, even before assuming the presidency, has already shunned and harassed journalists, favouring the influencers and vloggers who helped catapult him into power.

The internet remains relatively free and open in the Philippines as compared to other countries in Southeast Asia. But judging by current trends, laws and institutions will continue to be used to justify the censorship of critical voices both online and offline, all towards the President's "call for unity" in the country and among Filipinos.[270]

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[270] Marcos, F. R. (2022, June 30). Inaugural Address of President Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos, Jr., June 30, 2022. https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2022/06/30/inaugural-address-of-president-ferdinand-romualdez-marcos-jr-june-30-2022/

Annex PH-1: Probed ISPs

Probed ISPs: Angeles City Cable Television Network, Inc. (AS137226), Asian Vision Cable (AS56099), CMD Cable Vision, Inc (AS140243), Converge ICT Solutions Inc. (AS17639), Dasca Cable Services, Inc. (AS136515), DCTV Cable Network Broadband Services Inc (AS133334), Dito Telecommunity Corp. (AS139831), Eastern Telecoms Phils., Inc. (AS9658), Galaxy Cable Corp. (AS135582), Globe Telecom Inc. (AS132199), Globe Telecoms (AS4775), Globotech Communications (AS36666), Google LLC (AS36384), Infinivan Incorporated (AS135607), Kabayan Cable TV Systems Inc. (AS135594), M247 Europe Srl (AS9009), Nexlogic Telecommunications Network, Inc. (AS135025), Philcomm (AS9927), Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company (AS9299), RBC Cable Master System (AS138025), Skybroadband Skycable Corporation (AS23944), Smart Broadband, Inc. (AS10139), and Zenlayer Inc (AS21859)

iMAP State of Internet Censorship Report 2022

COUNTRY: THAILAND

By Siti Nurliza Samsudin (Sinar Project), Kelly Koh (Sinar Project) and Thai Netizens Network

Key Findings

- Multiple censorship events were reported during the 2020/2021 protests in Thailand particularly under the Regulation 29 which was allegedly to address "fake news" related to the COVID-19 pandemic
- In the six-month period from January to June 2022, 3,129,067 measurements were recorded in OONI's testing for web connectivity from 30 vantage points. From this total, it was found that 95.8% (2,996,695) were OK, 3.1% (96,626) were anomalies, 0.3% (8,982) were confirmed blockings and 0.9% (26,664) were failed measurements.
- OONI's confirmed list of blocked domains contain 76 domains from various categories, whereas further analysis by heuristics added 43 to the list, bringing a total of 119 domains which are confirmed blockings. In comparison, the 2017 report showed that there were 13 websites blocked.
- In the list, categories which contain the more than 10 domains are Anonymization and circumvention tools, Gambling, Human Rights Issues, News Media and Pornography.

Introduction

Internet censorship in Thailand, as reported by a previous report using OONI data in 2017, was mainly on the grounds of national security. The report highlighted that 10,000 URLs were blocked in 2010, as well as 56 websites found to be blocked between May to June 2014 during the coup d'etat.

As part of the Internet Monitoring and Action Project (iMAP) which promotes and defend Internet freedoms in South and Southeast Asia, this report intends to report on the monitoring of network interference and restrictions to the freedom of expression online. This report is divided into following sections: background information on political landscape, legal environment and reported cases of internet censorship, as well as network landscape and internet penetration, followed by findings of internet censorship in Thailand, acknowledgement of limitations, conclusions and acknowledgements.

Background

Thailand, officially known as the Kingdom of Thailand is located at the centre of Mainland Southeast Asia with a population of more than 71 million. It is bordered to the north by Myanmar and Laos, to the east by Laos and Cambodia, to the south by the Gulf of Thailand and Malaysia, and to the west by the Andaman Sea. The country consists of 75% Thai, 14% Thai Chinese and 3% ethnically Malay. The official language is Thai, with over 90% of the population using the language daily[271]. Census data approximated that 93% of the population practice Buddhism, whereas a significant 5% are Muslim, and the rest are Christian (1%) and Others (<1%)[272]. Additionally, 51% of the population live in urban areas.

Based on an overview by the World Bank, the country has moved over the last four decades from a low-income to an upper middle-income status supported by its export-led model. Nevertheless, there was stagnation in productivity and incomes since 2015 due to domestic political turmoil, followed by the largest contraction of income during the pandemic with GDP -6.1% in 2020. In 2021, the economy grew 1.6% over the year despite experiencing another wave of COVID-19. In the same period, the latest poverty numbers were recorded at 6.8% in 2020.

Political Landscape

Politically, Thailand transitioned to a military-dominated semielected government in 2019 following five years of military dictatorship. The king is the head of state, whilst the head of the government is the prime minister, elected by both houses of the National Assembly. The current constitution was adopted in 2017, whereby the Parliament is bicameral, consisting of Senate and House of Representatives. The parliament could also select a candidate as Prime Minister who is not one of its members including non-politicians. Critics suggest that it effectively allows the military to control the government regardless of the outcome of subsequent elections.

According to the 2022 Thailand Country Report by Freedom House, Thailand is categorized as "Not Free" with a score of 29 over 100. The democratic deterioration and frustration led to massive demonstrations, which was followed by the regime employing authoritarian tactics, including arbitrary arrests, intimidation, lèse-majesté charges, and harassment of activists. Press freedom is constrained, due process is not guaranteed, and there is impunity for crimes committed against activists. Additionally, Thailand scored 36/100 in Internet Freedom. In 2021, the government promulgated Regulation 29, which prohibited speech that would "instigate fear." Regulation 29 also required internet service providers to surrender the internet protocol addresses of users engaging in such speech to the authorities. A civil court

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[271] World Population Review. (2021). *Thailand Population 2020 (Demographics, Maps, Graphs).* Worldpopulationreview.com. https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/thailand-population
[272] Religion in Thailand. (2022, November 11). *Wikipedia.* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Thailand#Demographics

blocked the regulation's use in August, responding to a petition from activists and media outlets.

Legal Environment

Freedom of expression

Thailand Penal Code, Section 112 (Lèse-majesté)

Section 112 of the Thai Penal Code penalises anyone who "defames, insults or threatens the King, the Queen, the Heir-apparent or the Regent" with a punishment of imprisonment of three to fifteen years. Lèse-majesté defendants are routinely denied bail, and convictions often result in heavy sentences in most cases. Lèse-majesté or defamation complaints can be lodged by any one citizen against another, and such complaints always require formal investigation from authorities. This brings about the potential for abuse in imposing systematic restrictions of information control to limit social mobilisation around key political events.

Computer Crime Act

Article 14(1) of the 2007 Computer Crime Act (CCA) penalises individuals found to have uploaded content deemed to be "forged", "false", or which is likely to "cause damage to a third party" with an imprisonment of up to 5 years along with a maximum fine of 100,000 Thai Baht. Such broad and ambiguous language opens up the law to abuse. Article 14(1) of the CCA has long been utilised against journalists, activists and internet users for content considered to be damaging by government sanctioned authorities.

The 2017 amendment to article 14(2) of the CCA broadens the scope, incriminating those found guilty of uploading information that would "damage the maintenance of national security, public safety, national economic security or public infrastructure serving national's public interest or cause panic in the public", and expanding the power authorities have in abusing a person's exercise of their protected right to freedom of expression.

Internal Security Act 2008

Under the 2008 Internal Security Act, the ISA would establish The Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC), a situation monitoring center in every province which would have the authority to respond to alleged threats to national security. The ISOC would be authorised to exercise its powers with respect to situations affecting the national security where a state of emergency has not been declared yet, bypassing the role of parliaments and courts in reviewing or approving the necessity of such abuses of power.

Press freedom

Press freedom in Thailand has been severely restricted post military coup following the military junta's creation of the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) tasked with enforcing widespread censorship.

NCPO Order 97/2014

The NCPO announced order 97/2014, "Cooperating with the Work of the National Council for Peace and Order(NCPO) and the Distribution of News to the Public" which prohibits publication or broadcast of criticisms of the military authorities from print media, radio, TV, and online media. The NCPO has sole discretion in determining what content falls within prohibited categories. Violations of provisions in this announcement could result in prosecution under the law, and the immediate suspension of the publication or program.

Article 5 of the Head NCPO Order ³⁄₂₀₁₅

Under Article 5 of the Head NCPO Order ³⁄₂₀₁₅, NCPO officers are authorised to issue orders prohibiting the distribution of press items, or the sale of any publication or material that is deemed to have the potential to cause public alarm, or which contains false information likely to cause public misunderstanding, or which threatens public order or national security.

Regulation 29: Regulation Issued under Section 9 of the Emergency Decree on Public Administration in Emergency Situations B.E. 2548 (2005) (No. 29)

Under Regulation 29 it is prohibited for any person to present or disseminate content that:[273]

- is distorted information which causes misunderstanding of the emergency situation to the extent of affecting the security of the state, public order, or good morals of the people of Thailand; or
- may instigate fear among the people.

Significantly, Regulation 29 allows the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) to identify the IP address and other information of the owner of content said to violate the regulation. It also empowers the NBTC to order Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to provide such information and to cease providing internet services for the IP address. Violation of Regulation 29 and failure by ISP providers to comply with orders issued by the NBTC both carry punishment including fines and imprisonment.

While Regulation 29 is said to be an attempt by the Thai Government to address "fake news" relating to the COVID-19 pandemic in Thailand, the regulation has been widely criticized as broadly empowering the government to control all forms of information in the public sphere, including intervention with essential media functions. This is exacerbated by the use of

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[273] *Thai Court Rules That Regulation Restraining Internet Access Violates Right to Free Expression.* (2021, August 12). Tilleke & Gibbins. https://www.tilleke.com/insights/thai-court-rules-that-regulation-restraining-internet-access-violates-right-to-free-expression/

ambiguous language prohibiting content "that may instigate fear among the people" and which is not limited to false or distorted information.

Access to information

Official Information Act 1997

The 1997 Official Information Act gives Thai citizens the right to request for the disclosure of official government information from state agencies. However, authorities have the right to reject requests for the disclosure of information under Article 15 of the act, under unclear and overly broad reasons such as the "decline in efficiency of law enforcement, risk to national security, and endangerment of life or safety to any person". Although citizens have the right to appeal the rejection, appeals submitted to the committee take a long time to be considered and process, making access difficult for citizens.

In addition, the Act does not cover information in the possession of private entities, which has led to ongoing disputes over whether independent public agencies such as the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC), the Office of the Election Commission, and the Office of the Auditor General fall under the scope of the Act.

Privacy

Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand

The 2007 Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand provides citizens with the right to privacy. Under Article 35 of the constitution, "A person's family rights, dignity, reputation or the right of privacy shall be protected. The assertion or circulation of a statement or picture in any manner whatsoever to the public, which violates or affects a person's family rights, dignity, reputation or the right of privacy, shall not be made except for the case which is beneficial to the public".

Following the 2014 military coup, an interim constitution was enacted, in which almost all of the provisions of the original constitution were suspended. There is no longer an explicit provision related to the right to privacy.

While there is no comprehensive general data protection law in Thailand, personal data in the public sector is at some level protected by the Official Information Act B.E. 2540 (1997) which obligates state agencies to allow individuals to correct personal data that is maintained by the agencies. Personal information in the private sector, such as credit information, patient data, and telecommunication data, is regulated by sectoral laws, like the 2008 Credit Information Business Act, the 2007 National Health Act, and the 2006 Notification of the National Telecommunications Commission (on measures to protect the rights of telecommunication consumers in the areas of personal data, right to privacy, and freedom of communication via telecommunication networks).

Censorship and surveillance

2017 Computer Crime Act, Article 20

Under Article 20 of the 2017 Computer-related Crime Act (CCA), the "Computer Data Screening Committee", a 9 member panel appointed by the government would have the power to suggest the court to suppress or remove computer data that is "deemed to be a breach to the public order or moral high ground of the people." Due to the broadness of this definition, this allows authorities to act as moral crusaders, giving them a wide latitude to suppress online content that does not violate any laws, but that they deem to be a breach of public morals.

2017 Computer Crime Act, Article 18

Articles 18(2) and 18(3) of the 2017 Computer Crime Act (CCA) would allow user-related data and traffic data to be accessed by authorities without a court order under probable cause to assist with investigations related to an offense under the CCA or other laws.

Article 18(7) would allow authorities with a court order to compel service providers in assisting with the decryption of encoded data, undermining the use of encryption tools as a protection of user privacy.

Reported cases of internet censorship

2020/2021 protests

In early 2020, demonstrations began against the government of Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha. They later expanded to include the unprecedented demands for reform of the Thai monarchy. The protests were initially triggered by the dissolution of the Future Forward Party (FFP) in late February 2020 which was critical of Prayut, the changes to the Thai constitution in 2017, and the country's political landscape that it gave rise to[274].

Then in October 2020, Thai authorities blocked access to the online petition site Change.org, after it hosted a petition calling for King Maha Vajiralongkorn to be declared "persona non grata" in Germany which is where he usually spends his vacation. The petition attracted 130,000 signatures before the website was blocked by major service providers, including AIS, DTAC, and True during the height of pro-democracy protests.

The website redirected to a blockpage traced to the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society claiming that the content is illegal in Thailand based on the Computer Crime Act. Following this, the Change.org team appeared to the court and the website was accessible again after 6 months.

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[274]Wikipedia Contributors. *2020–2021 Thai protests.* Wikipedia; Wikimedia Foundation. (2021, October 29). https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2020%E2%80%932021_Thai_protests

During the protests, media outlets were also censored including BBC, Al Jazeera, CNN, as well as four Thai online news platforms: Voice TV, The Standard, the Reporters and Prachatai in October 2020. According to the same ministry, the news outlet's coverage of pro-democracy protests in Bangkok violated the Emergency Decree on Public Administration in Emergency Situations and the Computer-Related Crime Act

Additionally, in 2021, a game of clicking a cat became globally popular: Popcat.click. Players of the game gain points by clicking or tapping to make the cat's mouth open with a popping sound[275]. Subsequently, a group of Thai programmers launched a knock-off version of the game featuring the Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha (prayut.click). The Ministry then blocked this website because it allegedly violated the Computer Crime Act. The website is now taken down.
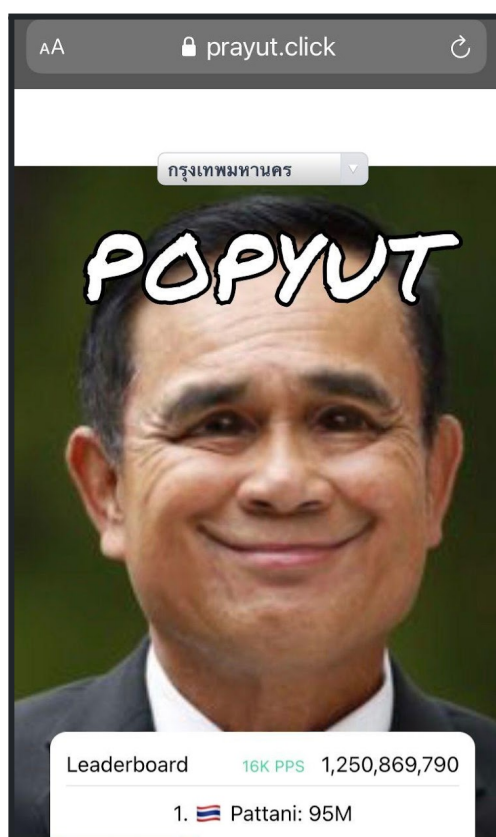
Figure 1: Screenshot of the game website featuring the Thai Prime Minister (prayut.click)

Further proving the censorship during the protests, a leaked document outlining the government's plan to order internet providers to block Telegram, a platform widely used by activists to organize protests and mobilize supporters in October 2020. The document - apparently produced by Thailand's digital economy ministry, which has the power to censor the internet - was sent to the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission.

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[275]r-offers-thailand-respite-from-worries-of-covid-crisis/

The document reads: ""The Ministry of Digital Economy and Society is seeking your co-operation to inform the Internet Service Providers and all mobile network operators to suspend the use of Telegram app."[276]

Figure 2: Letter from the Ministry of Digital Economy to the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission on the suspension of use of Telegram app

However, those on the ground in Thailand had noted that Telegram was still working during the period. It may be possible that some of the countermeasures set up by Telegram have been effective in keeping Telegram up for the Thai.

Network Landscape and Internet Penetration

Thailand obtained internet access in 1996, the third country in Southeast Asia to do so. As of now, 5G internet is also available in the country.[277] Thailand is also one of the top 10 countries with the fastest broadband internet speeds in 2021[278].

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[276] Chen, C. (2020, October 20). Thailand orders ISPs to block Telegram amid ongoing protests. PIA VPN Blog. https://www.privateinternetaccess.com/blog/thailand-orders-isps-to-block-telegram-amid-ongoing-protests/

[277] *Internet in Thailand.* (2022, August 23). Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_in_Thailand

[278] *Internet Speeds by Country 2022.* (n.d.). https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/internet-speeds-by-country

In terms of internet access[279], 85% of households have access at home, and 98% of the population is covered by at least a 4G mobile network. There is little gap in internet access between urban and rural areas, with 89% of urban households and 82% of rural households having access.

The National Telecommunications Council grant licenses to operate to internet service providers in Thailand. There is a mix of state-owned companies and private operators, where the state-owned are CAT Telecom and TOT and the three major mobile carriers are Advance Info Service (AIS), DTAC and TrueMove.

In the 2017 report, it was highlighted that the Thai government has held expansive control over the internet, facilitated by its relationships with the internet providers and telecommunication companies. Former politicians, military officers, or members of their families also hold key positions in these companies.

Findings of internet censorship in Thailand

The testing period covered in the analysis is from 1 January to 30 June 2022.

Blocking of websites

As at time of writing this report, the Citizen Lab test list of Thailand consisted of 446 URLs.

In the six-month period, 3,129,067 measurements were recorded in OONI's testing for web connectivity from 30 vantage points. From this total, it was found that 95.8% (2,996,695) were OK, 3.1% (96,626) were anomalies, 0.3% (8,982) were confirmed blockings and 0.9% (26,664) were failed measurements. Furthermore, 5 ASNs made up about 80% of the total measurements equivalent to 2.5 million measurements: JasTel Network International Gateway (29%), TripleT (16%), SBN-IIG (14%), TOT Public Company Limited (13%) and TRUE Internet Co. Ltd.

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[279] *Digital Development. (n.d.).* ITU.
https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Dashboards/Pages/Digital-Development.aspx
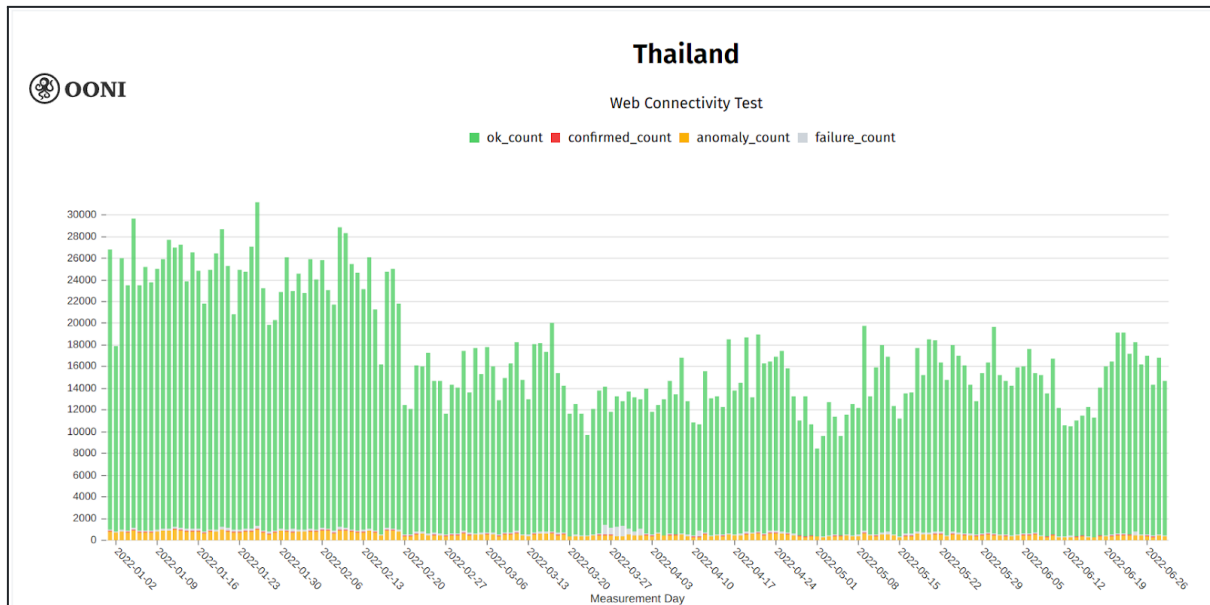
Figure 3: OONI measurements in Thailand, January-June 2022

OONI's confirmed list of blocked domains contain 76 domains from various categories, whereas further analysis by heuristics added 43 to the list, bringing a total of 119 domains which are confirmed blockings. In comparison, the 2017 report showed that there were 13 websites blocked.

In the analysis, it was found that the blockings were conducted through DNS tampering, which redirected the domains to 2 IP addresses: ['180.180.255.130'] and ['125.26.170.3']. The former address did not show any blockpages and only time-outs, but as this IP address belonged to a local ISP TOT Public Company Limited, it is highly likely that it is a confirmed blocking.

The latter, led to a blockpage as below

Figure 4: Blockpage in Thailand traced to the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society

Additionally, there were also blockings found from HTTP tampering whereby measurements returned with HTTP headers/body as below which traced back to the same blockpage (http://103.288.24.21) or a blank page that timed out (http://110.164.252.137) .

By category, the confirmed list of blockings comprised of various categories:
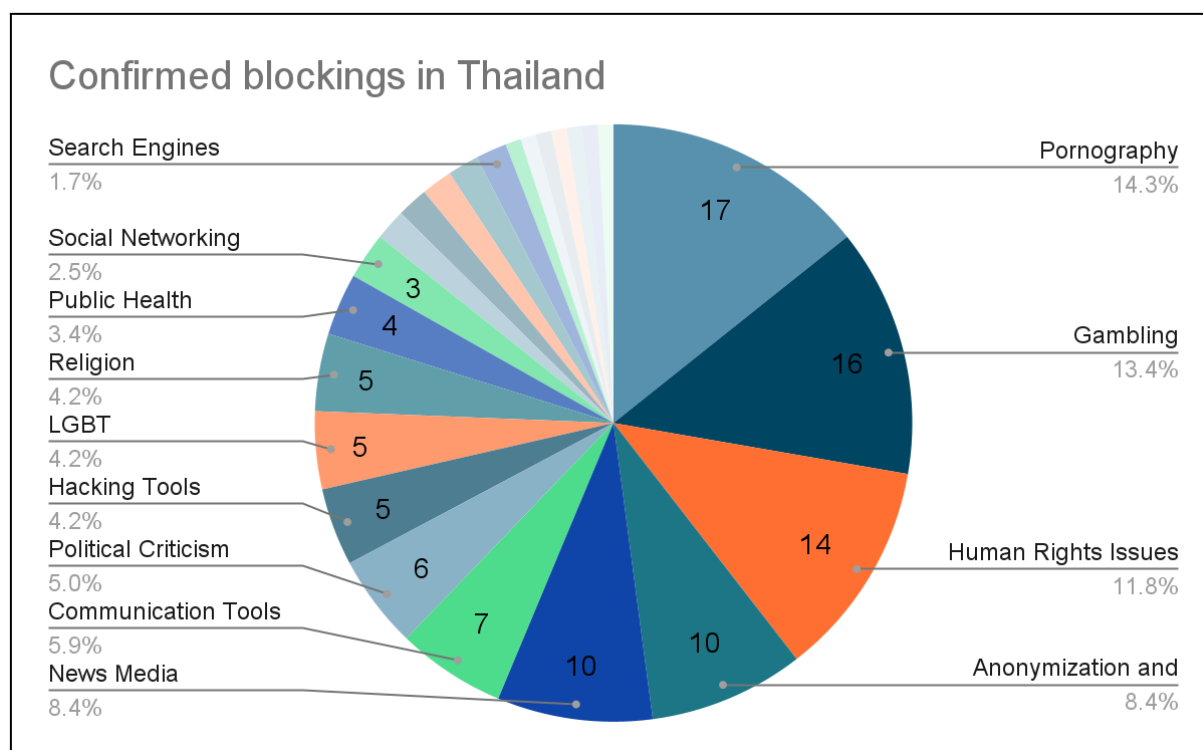
Figure 5: Pie chart depicting confirmed blockings in Thailand

The list is as in **Appendix 1**.

In the list, categories which contain the more than 10 domains are Anonymization and circumvention tools, Gambling, Human Rights Issues, News Media and Pornography.

Anonymization and circumvention tools

10 domains related to anonymization and circumvention tools were found blocked as follows:

Confirmed by OONI	Confirmed by heuristics
anonymouse.org	proxify.com
ultrasurf.us	www.hidemyass.com
proxy.org	www.hotspotshield.com
proxytools.sourceforge.net	www.jmarshall.com
spys.ru	www.peacefire.org

Based solely on OONI's data, testing of the 10 domains result in the following:

OK	Confirmed	Anomaly	Failure	Total
20,401	563	2,270	381	23,615

(86%)	(2%)	(10%)	(2%)	(100%)
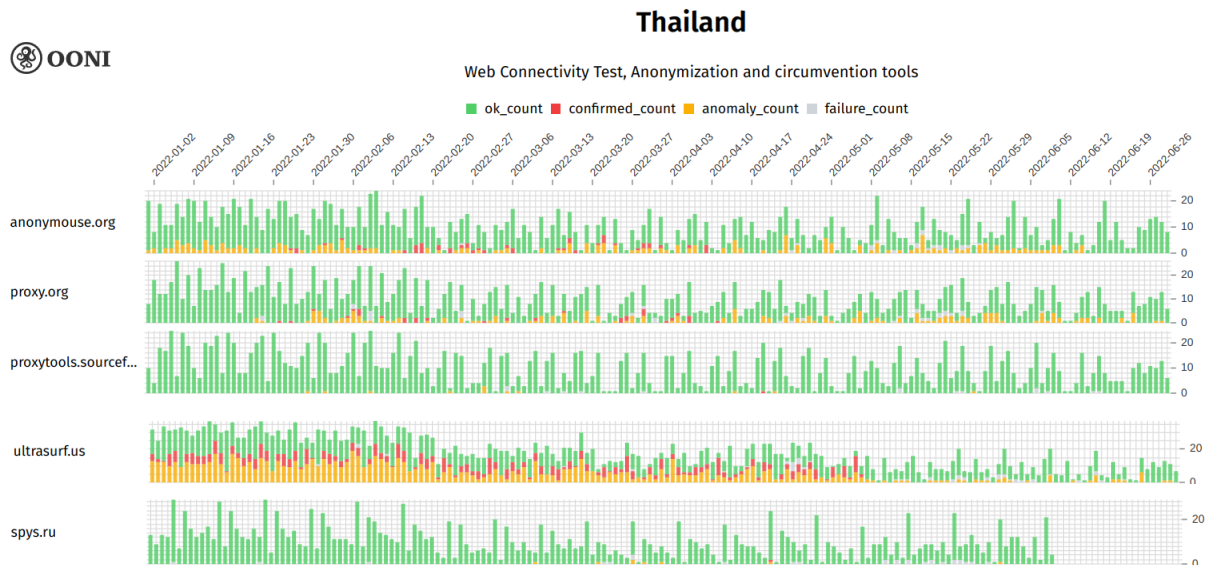
Figure 6: OONI measurements of confirmed blocked domains related to Anonymization and circumvention tools

Looking at the 5 domains confirmed blocked by OONI, the blockings occurred throughout the period, except for "proxytools.sourceforge.net" and "spys.ru" where the blockings happened only a few times.

The rest of the 5 domains, which were confirmed by the heuristics were either blocked through DNS or HTTP tampering. Omitting the "OK" measurements, there were up to 25 blockings per day recorded for the 5 domains, with mostly TLS connection reset, HTTP connection reset and DNS inconsistency.

Gambling

16 domains related to Gambling were detected blocked either solely by OONI or further by heuristics:

Confirmed by OONI	Confirmed by heuristics
Bet365.com	www.betdaq.com
Ibcbet.com	www.ladbrokes.com
www.888casino.com	www.williamhill.com
www.betfair.com	www.grandonline.com
www.casinotropez.com	casino.com
www.europacasino.com	
www.riverbelle.com	

www.spinpalace.com	
www.sportingbet.com	
www.sportsinteraction.com	
www.10bet.com	

Based solely on OONI's data, testing of the 16 domains resulted in the following:

OK	Confirmed	Anomaly	Failure	Total
10,931 (69%)	1,453 (9%)	3,412 (21%)	88 (1%)	15,884 (100%)

Looking at the 11 domains confirmed blocked by OONI, the blockings occurred throughout the period, with highest confirmed and anomalies for "bet365.com", "Ibcbet.com" and "www.sportingbet.com"
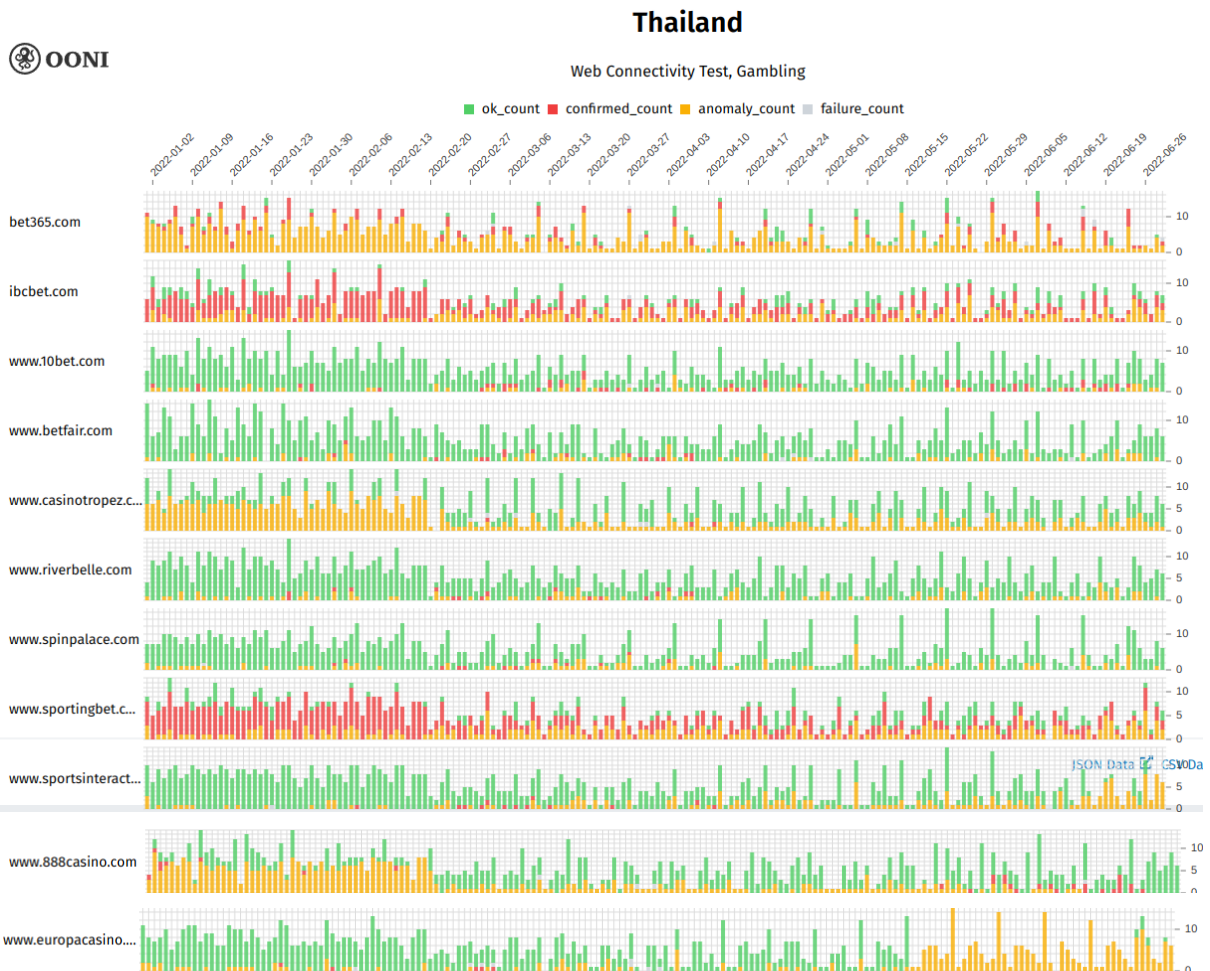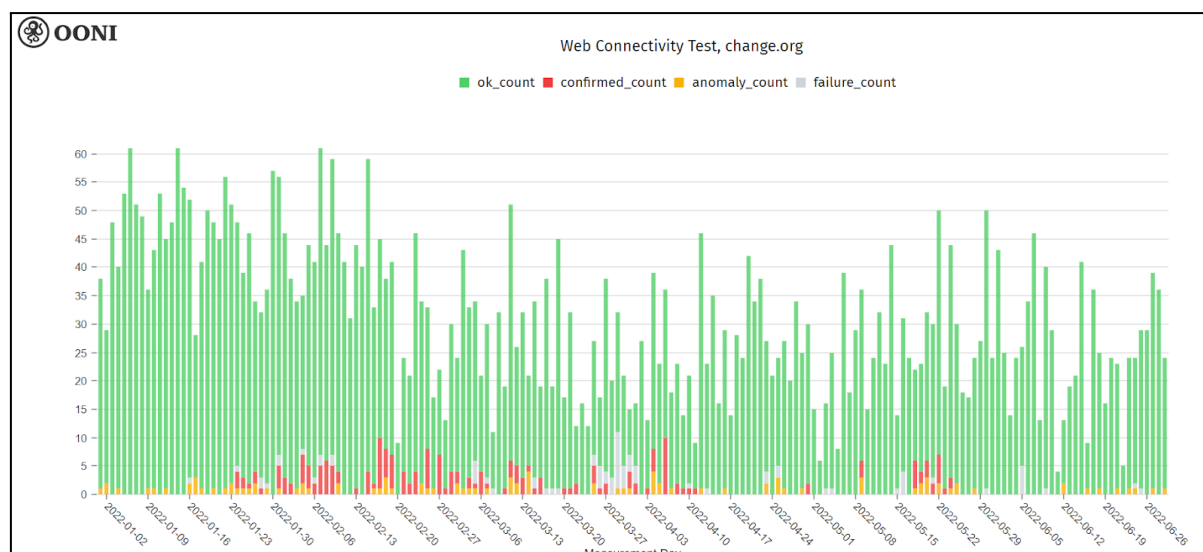

Figure 7: OONI measurements of confirmed blocked domains related to Gambling

The rest of the 5 domains, which were confirmed by the heuristics were either blocked through DNS or HTTP tampering. Omitting the "OK" measurements, there were up to 10

blockings per day recorded for the 5 domains, with mostly TLS connection reset and DNS confirmed.

Human Rights Issues

In line with human rights issues highlighted in the 2022 Thailand Country Report by Freedom House, 14 domains related were blocked as follows:

Confirmed by OONI	Confirmed by heuristics
no112.org	hirvikatu10.net
www.no112.org	hrlibrary.umn.edu
change.org	www.hrw.org
www.enlightened-jurists.com	www.humanrights.asia
laborrights.org	www.ihf-hr.org
	www.ohchr.org
	www.onlinewomeninpolitics.org
	www.mwgthailand.org
	hrw.org

Based solely on OONI's data, testing of the 14 domains resulted in the following:

OK	Confirmed	Anomaly	Failure	Total
42,616 (89%)	1,636 (3%)	2,869 (6%)	584 (1%)	47,705 (100%)

On the OONI Explorer, the 5 domains confirmed to have been blocked throughout the period, with most measurements shown on www.enlightened-jurists.com. According to a 2013 The Nation Thailand article, "enlightened jurists" or Khana Nitirat are a group of university law lecturers who called on MPs who voted for an all-elected Senate to ignore the Constitutional Court's ruling that struck down that amendment.
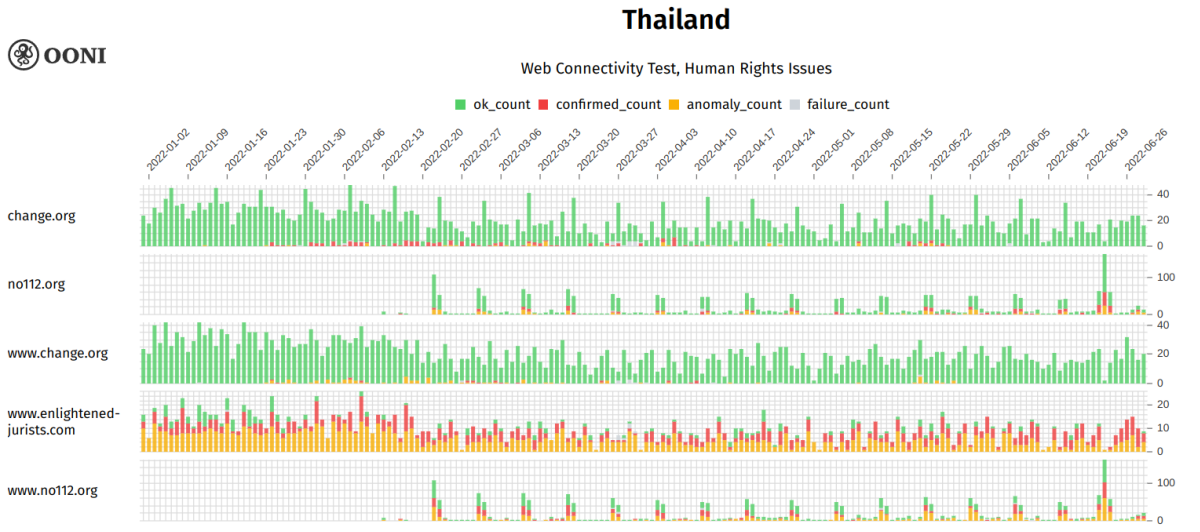
Figure 8: OONI measurements of confirmed blocked domains related to Human rights issues

The rest of the 7 domains, which were confirmed by the heuristics were either blocked through DNS or HTTP tampering. Omitting the "OK" measurements, there were up to 20 blockings per day recorded for the 7 domains, with mostly HTTP connection reset.

News Media

10 domains related were confirmed blocked as follows:

Confirmed by OONI	Confirmed by heuristics
www.midnightuniv.org	midnightuniv.org
en.wikipedia.org	wartani.com
nypost.com	
th.wikipedia.org	
thaienews.blogspot.com	
www.bbc.com	
www.dailymail.co.uk	
www.theguardian.com	

Based solely on OONI's data, testing of the 10 domains resulted in the following:

OK	Confirmed	Anomaly	Failure	Total
40,973 (76%)	3,276 (6%)	9,306 (17%)	673 (1%)	54,228 (100%)

Looking at the 8 domains confirmed blocked by OONI, there were significant anomalies throughout the period, with obvious blockings on "thaienews.blogspot.com" and "www.midnightuniv.org" across vantage points.
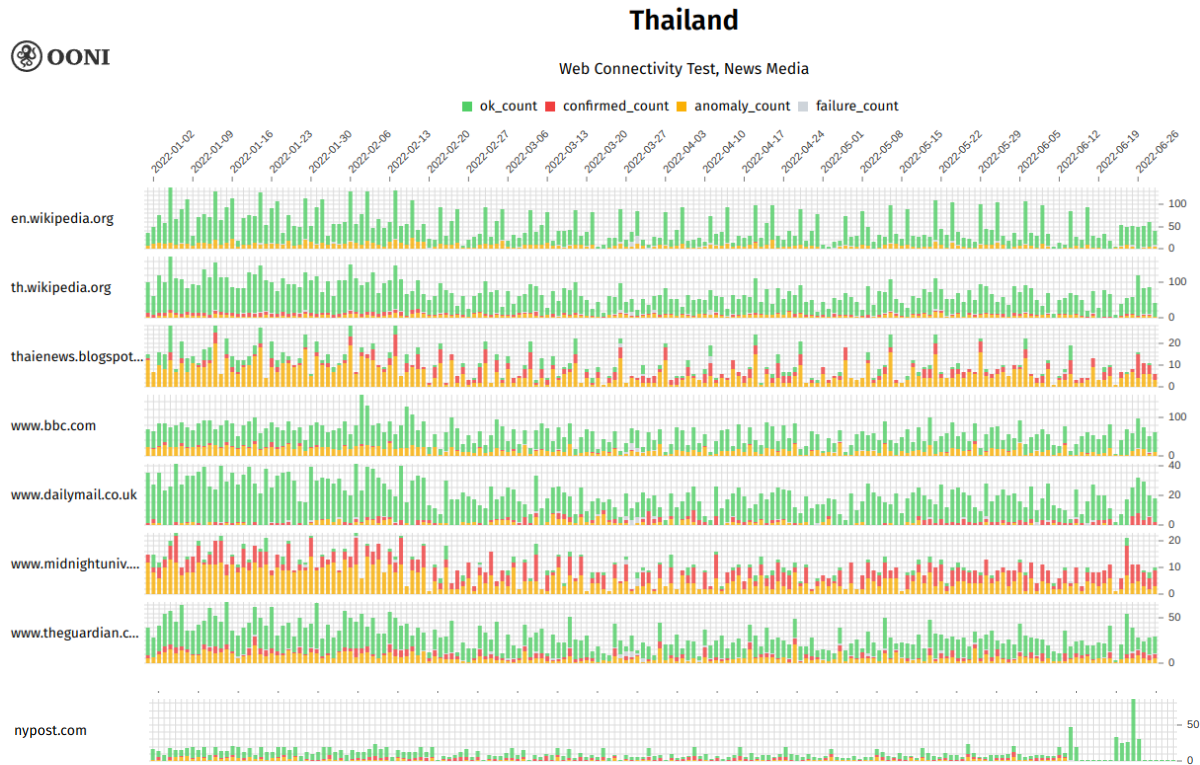
Figure 9: OONI measurements of confirmed blocked domains related to News Media

The rest of the 2 domains, which were confirmed by the heuristics were either blocked through DNS or HTTP tampering. Omitting the "OK" measurements, there were up to 10 blockings per day recorded for the 2 domains, with mostly HTTP generic failure or HTTP confirmed.

Pornography

17 domains related were confirmed blocked as follows:

Confirmed by OONI	Confirmed by heuristics
www.pornhub.com	8thstreetlatinas.com
beeg.com	taknai.com
www.89.com	xhamster.com
www.fuckingfreemovies.com	bravotube.net
www.sex.com	avgle.com
www.thaigirls100.net	

www.wetplace.com	
www.xvideos.com	
www.youporn.com	
www.av-th.net	
www.thaichix.com	
pornhub.com	

Based solely on OONI's data, testing of the 17 domains resulted in the following:

OK	Confirmed	Anomaly	Failure	Total
8,038 (58%)	519 (4%)	5,093 (37%)	94 (1%)	13,744 (100%)

Looking at the 12 domains confirmed blocked by OONI, the confirmed blockings and anomalies were consistent throughout the period:
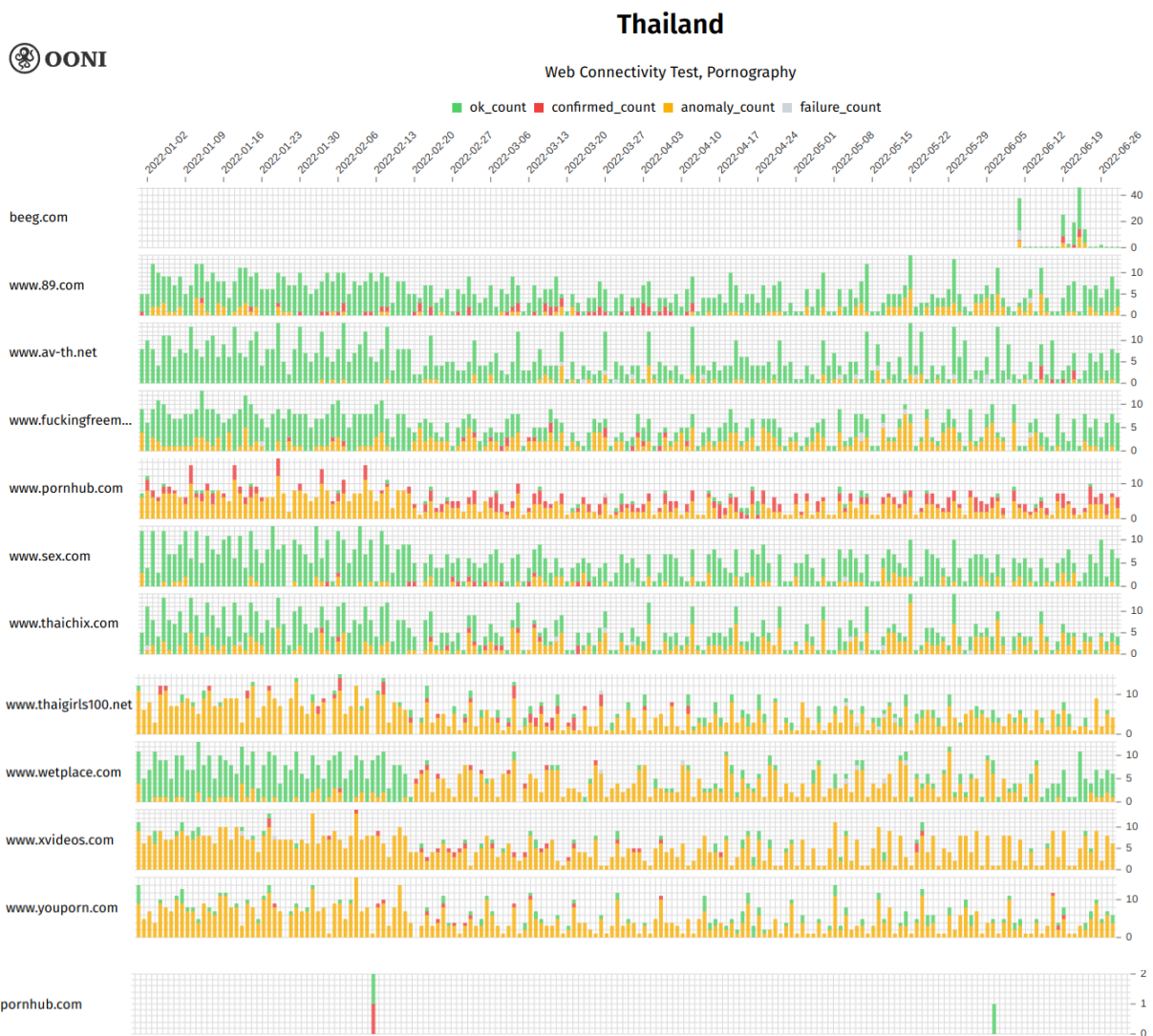
Figure 10: OONI measurements of confirmed blocked domains related to Pornography

The rest of the 5 domains, which were confirmed by the heuristics were either blocked through DNS or HTTP tampering. Omitting the "OK" measurements, there were up to 10 blockings per day recorded for the 5 domains, with various types of blockings.

Interesting websites

The findings below portray analysis of measurements on 2 highlighted websites: Change.org and No112.org.

Change.org

Figure 11: OONI measurements of Change.org

Signs of blocking of Change.org still persisted in 2022, after it was first blocked during the protests in October 2020. According to OONI's data, it was found blocked from January until May.

OK	Confirmed	Anomaly	Failure	Total
5,243 (93%)	187 (2%)	100 (2%)	78 (1%)	5,608 (100%)

By ASN, it was found that the internet provider which showed signs of confirmed blocking were AS137850 (Office of Info.Tech. Admin. for Educational Development) and AS4750 (CS LOXINFO PUBLIC COMPANY LIMITED).

Blockings were detected from 24 January 2022 until 24 May 2022 on AS137580. From the raw measurements, the blockings were conducted through DNS tampering with a blockpage (125.26.170.3) by the Ministry of Digital Economy and Safety.
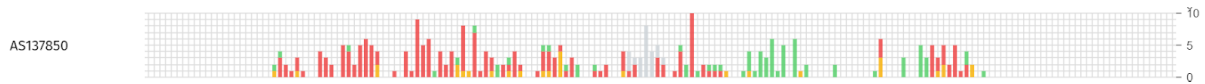
Figure 12: OONI measurements of Change.org on AS137580

Whereas on AS4750, blockings were detected on 30 April 2022, although with only 2 measurements. As on AS137850, the blocking was also conducted through DNS tampering with a blockpage (125.26.170.3) by the Ministry of Digital Economy and Safety.

Figure 13: OONI measurements of Change.org on AS4750
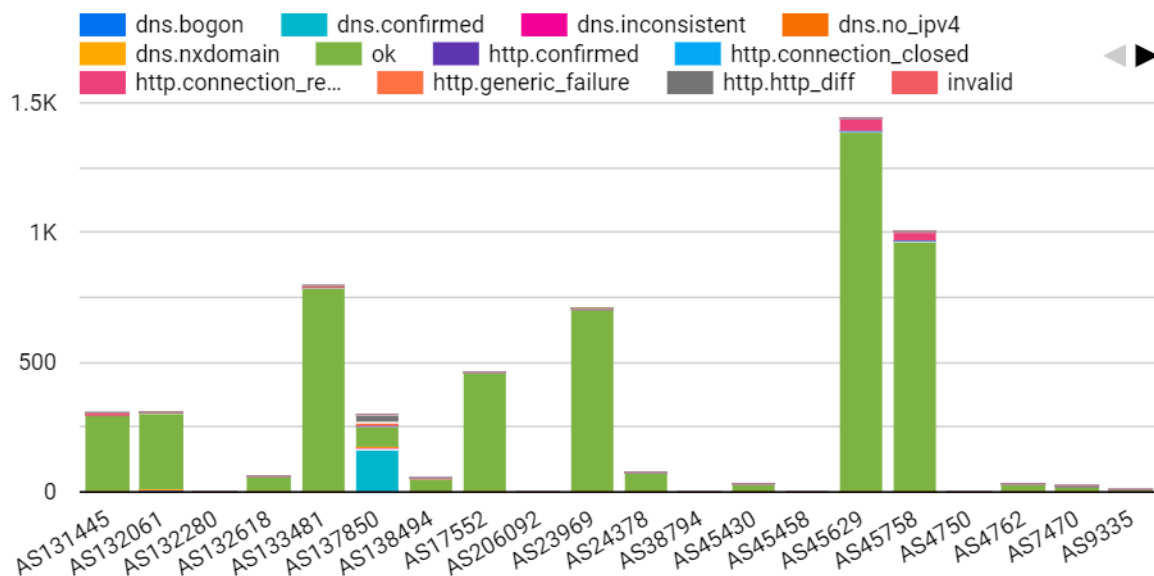
Figure 14: OONI measurements of Change.org by method of blocking

Looking at the other ASNs, there were also DNS inconsistencies recorded on AS45458 (SBN-IIG transit provider) and AS45758 (TripleT Internet). However, these may be cases of false positives.

No112.org

Lèse-majesté in Thailand is a crime according to Section 112 of the Thai Criminal Code. It is illegal to defame, insult, or threaten the monarch of Thailand (king, queen, heir-apparent, heir-presumptive, or regent). No112.org is a petition website to call for the abolishment of this section organised by the Thai Progressive Movement and the Ratsadon. Until the time of writing (September 2022), there were more than 237,000 signatures.

Based on OONI's data, confirmed blockings were detected from 16 February 2022 to 28 June 2022. There were also significant anomalies in the measurements.
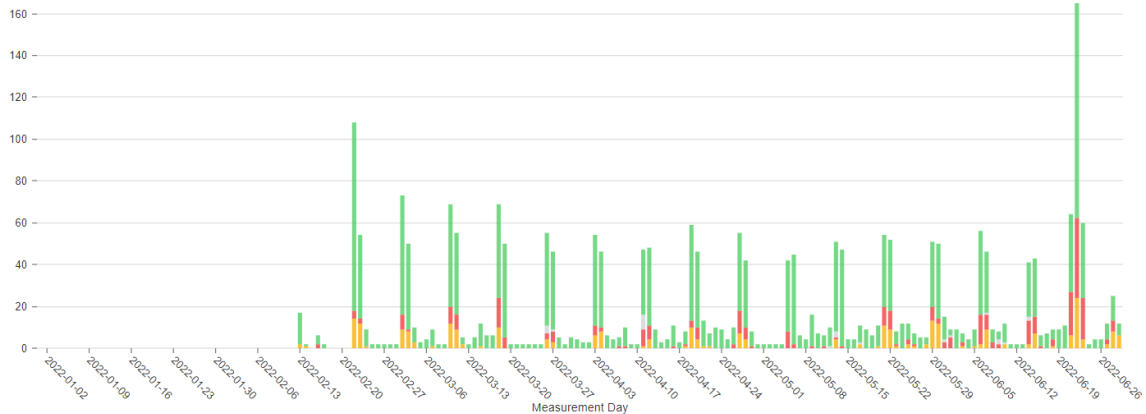
Figure 15: OONI measurements of No112.org

OK	Confirmed	Anomaly	Failure	Total
1,909 (76%)	303 (12%)	272 (11%)	25 (1%)	2,509 (100%)

By ASN, these confirmed blockings were detected on 8 vantage points: AS131090 (CAT TELECOM Public Company Ltd,CAT) , AS132061 (Realmove Company Limited), AS132618 (Real Future Company Limited), AS17552 (TRUE INTERNET Co.,Ltd.), AS23969 (TOT Public Company Limited), AS24378 (Total Access Communication PLC.), AS45758 (TripleT Internet) and AS7470 (TRUE INTERNET Co.,Ltd).
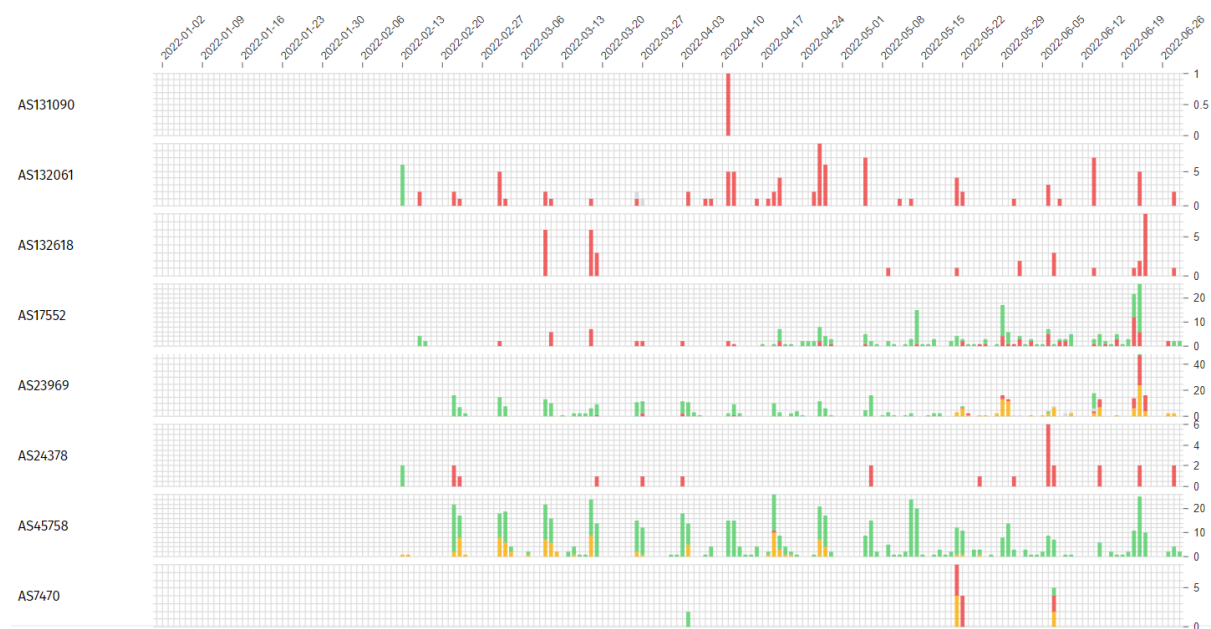
Figure 16: OONI measurements of No112.org by ASN

High anomalies were detected on AS137850 (Office of Info.Tech. Admin. for Educational Development). Based on raw measurements, these were due to HTTP inconsistencies, and the website was redirected to a "307 Temporary Redirect" page.
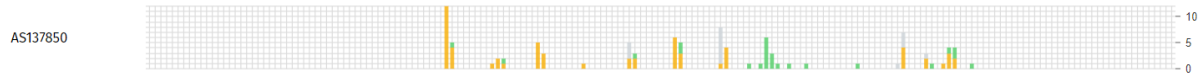
Figure 17: OONI measurements of No112.org on AS137580

Other than the confirmed blockings through DNS tampering, there were also DNS inconsistencies, TLS connection reset and HTTP connection reset on AS23969 (TOT Public Company Limited). There were also cases of HTTP generic failure on AS45758 (TripleT Internet service). Moreover, on AS137850 (Office of Info.Tech. Admin. for Educational Development), there were signs of blocking through DNS inconsistencies, HTTP generic failure, HTTP inconsistencies and TLS connection reset.

Blocking of Instant Messaging Apps

There were 106,595 measurements on instant messaging apps recorded on OONI during the six-month period, in particular for Facebook Messenger, Telegram, Signal and Whatsapp. In Thailand, there did not seem to be any signs of blocking as more than 99 percent of these testings were successful.

Blocking of Circumvention Tools

There were 55,573 measurements on circumvention tools recorded on OONI during the six-month period, in particular for Psiphon, Tor and Tor Snowflake. In Thailand, there did not seem to be any signs of blocking as more than 99 percent of these testings were successful. However, it may be noted that these tools may not be used as much as other tools in Thailand, since there were 10 domains related to anonymization and circumvention tools reported blocked using the web connectivity tests.

Acknowledgement of Limitations

The examination of the findings of this study is limited to network measurements that were collected from 1 January to 30 June 2022 to examine the most recent censorship trends and events.

Although the network measurements were collected from 30 vantage points in Thailand, the running of OONI software testing was not consistent across all networks.

Conclusion

Since the release of the 2017 report of The State of Censorship in Thailand, multiple censorship events had been reported, especially during the 2020/2021 protests. These

include websites related to human rights and news media, which significantly affect the internet freedom in the country. The number of domains reported blocked on OONI had increased from 13 to 119, possibly due to improved methodology and heightened measurements. In the list, categories which contain the more than 10 domains are Anonymization and circumvention tools, Gambling, Human Rights Issues, News Media and Pornography.

It is expected that with this study, the measurements continue to grow with wider networks and more testers.

iMAP State of Internet Censorship Report 2022

COUNTRY: VIETNAM

By Independent Researchers (Anonymous),
Kelly Koh (Sinar Project) and Siti Nurliza Samsudin (Sinar Project)

Key Findings

- Under the authoritarian political system, freedom of assembly, association, expression, press and religion, as well as civil society activism, is tightly restricted and controlled by the party despite legislation recognising civil and political rights in the Constitution.[280] Certain contents and topics related to curtailing political opposition, unfavourable to the party, corruption, and human rights issues are censored in various ways.
- The OONI data in Vietnam reveals 1108 inaccessible websites across 10 different Internet Service Providers (ISP), between 1st January 2022 and 30th June 2022. Among these ISPs, users almost connect to the internet by three major networks namely VNPT, FPT and Viettel. Vietnamese ISPs appear to primarily be implementing censorship through DNS and http requests which serve block pages.
- The main types of blocked sites include:
  - Political criticism
  - News Media (mainly foreign sites)
  - Human rights
  - Pornography
  - Government websites from other countries, especially those with military content
- WhatsApp, Facebook, Zalo, Line, Instagram, Tiktok and several social networks appear to be accessible in all tested networks during the testing period.

Introduction

Vietnam is one of the countries with the strictest surveillance in all aspects. Internet censorship is one of the government methods for national security. In the first half of 2022, more than 293,000 measurements (2054 URLs) were collected including global test list and country test list. The number of country test lists is over 500 URLs (corresponding to more than 60,000 measurements) based on the selected URL test list. Of these, more than 300 URLs have been reported as blocked or inaccessible, mostly with political and human rights websites. Freedom of speech and the press in Vietnam appear to be restricted without improvement. Independent news outlets such as BBC, CNN, RFA, RFI, VOA have also been blocked in the past. VPN tools have become very popular in the country.

Under a joint study by the independent researchers in Vietnam and Sinar Project with support from Open Observatory of Network Interference (OONI), this report aims to examine the current state of internet censorship in Vietnam by collecting and analysing network measurements to provide more transparency of internet controls in Vietnam.

The report is constructed in four parts. First, it provides information about Vietnam's network landscape, and internet penetration. Secondly, it discusses the legal environment on freedom of expression, access to information and privacy. The third part describes cases of

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[280]   Freedom   house.   (2022).   Vietnam   country   report.   Retrieved   from https://freedomhouse.org/country/vietnam

censorship and surveillance reported in the country. The remainder of the report documents this study's methodology and key findings.

Background

Vietnam is a socialist republic country in Southeast Asia. It is a 100 million population country situated in a strategic location of the Indochina peninsula. The country is bordered to the North by China, to the West by Laos and Cambodia and a long coast to the East by the Eastern Sea (South China sea).

Vietnam is a multi-ethnic country, made up of 54 ethnic groups. The Kinh ethnic group accounted for 85.4% of the population, while the remaining 53 ethnic groups make up only 14.6%.[281] The majority of Vietnamese practices folk religions (45.3%), 16.4% of the population were Buddhists, 8.2% were Christians, and about 30% were unaffiliated to any religion.[282]

Vietnam's transformation from one of the world's poorest countries in the 1980s to low middle-income status by 2010 is considered an economic success story. The Doi Moi reforms in 1986 led the country from a centralised economy to a liberalised and open market economy and focusing on a high level of foreign direct investment.[283] Since the 1990s, Vietnam has been one of the world's fastest GDP growth rate countries, at 6.86% annually during 1990-2019,[284] lifting millions of people out of poverty. Even under the COVID-19 situation, Vietnam is predicted to be one of the few economies with strong resilience with positive growth in the coming period.[285]

Political Landscape

The politics of Vietnam are dominated by a single party - the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV). While the ideological orthodoxy of Communism has become less important over time, the country is still influenced strongly by the CPV. The General Secretary of the CPV is the supreme leader leading the communist party and is head of the Politburo and the Central Military Commission. At the same time, the President is the head of state, and the Prime Minister is the head of government. Executive power is exercised by the government and the state. Legislative power is vested in the National Assembly of Vietnam. The judiciary is independent of the executive.[286] However, the separation of powers among the executive,

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[281] Open Development Vietnam. (2019). Ethnic minorities and indigenous people. Retrieved from https://vietnam.opendevelopmentmekong.net/topics/ethnic-minorities-and-indigenous-people/

[282] Pew research center. (2012. The Global Religious Landscape. Retrieved from https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-exec/

[283] Cameron A, et al. (2019). Vietnam's future digital economy – Towards 2030 and 2045. CSIRO, Brisbane. Retrieved from https://research.csiro.au/aus4innovation/foresight/

[284] World Bank. (2022). World Development Indicators database. Retrieved from https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=VN

[285] IMF. (2021). Vietnam: Successfully Navigating the Pandemic. Retrieved from https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2021/03/09/na031021-vietnam-successfully-navigating-the-pandemic

[286] Wikipedia. (2022). Politics of Vietnam. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_of_Vietnam#cite_note-1

legislative and judiciary is weak. In addition, there is a far-reaching overlap between the CPV and the government, extending to the lower levels of the political system.[287]

Legal environment

Freedom of the press

Freedom of the press is proclaimed in Article 19 of Vietnam's Constitution, however, accompanied by articles that allow for the imprisonment of any news and information provider who proves troublesome to the government. Precisely, articles 109, 117, and 331 of the penal code specify anyone found guilty of "activities aimed at overthrowing the government", "anti-state propaganda", or "abusing the rights to freedom and democracy" can be sentenced to up to 20 years in prison.[288] In addition, Press Law No. 103/2016/QH13 governs the press, including citizens' rights to freedom of press and freedom of speech in the press and the rights and obligations of agencies, organisations, and individuals involved in the media industry.

In practice, most news and media services are controlled by the state or have to follow the state's orders. Independent bloggers and journalists are the only sources of freely reported news and information in a country; however, they are also strictly monitored, and many are put into jails. Facebook, Youtube and Zalo - a Vietnamese messaging app- are the most popular online platforms and currently serve as major tools for circulating news and information.[289]

Access to information law

The Law on access to information was issued in 2016 and enacted in July 2018. This law is an important document detailing the people's right to information access and State agencies' information provision responsibility. While Vietnam has made significant steps to build the legal framework for the rights to information, there is still a long way toward effective implementation of the law at all levels and stakeholders. Most state agencies do not disclose how information can be requested, many local government employees have not been trained to process information requests, and not enough citizens have been made aware of their rights.[290]

Privacy

Data privacy and security are mentioned in multiple government degrees and laws, including IT law 2006 (67/2006/QH11), Consumer Protection Law 2010 (59/2010/QH12), Civil Code 2015 (91/2015/QH13), Cyber Information Security Law 2015 (86/2015/QH13), Cybersecurity Law 2018 (24/2018/QH14), etc.[291] However, Vietnam's legal regulations on personal data are

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[287] The Political System in Vietnam. (2012). In The Vietnamese Health Care System in Change: A Policy Network Analysis of a Southeast Asian Welfare Regime (pp. 259-264). ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute.

[288] Reporter without borders. (2022). Vietnam country fact file. Retrieved from https://rsf.org/en/country/vietnam

[289] Reporter without borders. (2022). Vietnam country fact file. Retrieved from https://rsf.org/en/country/vietnam.

[290] Transparency International. (2020). Ensure the rights to information in Vietnam - one step of many. Retrieved from https://www.transparency.org/en/blog/ensuring-the-right-to-information-in-vietnam-one-step-of-many

[291] Amcham Vietnam. (2019). Data protection in Vietnam: overview. Retrieved from https://www.amchamvietnam.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Data-Protection-in-Vietnam-Overview-April-2019.pdf

still inadequate, inconsistent, and contradictory. Sanctions for violations are scattered in many legal documents, currently at a deficient level and not deterrent enough.[292]

In particular, the Cybersecurity Law 2018 provoked many debates nationally and internationally on personal data privacy and information censorship. The law requires companies like Facebook and Google to store information about Vietnamese users in Vietnam physically. It allows the government to block access to a broad range of content that could be defined as allegedly dangerous to national security. A draft decree to clarify the law's implementation was still under consideration as of November 2020.

Following that, a Decree on personal data protection is put forward in the drafting process not finished until its version 2 from February 2021. It is expected to provide a robust set of rules regulating specific rights of data subjects, cross-border transfer of data, and processing of sensitive personal data. Non-compliance may subject stakeholders to a temporary suspension of operation and/or revocation of permission for cross-border data transfer, in addition to monetary fines. The governing scope of the Decree encompasses local and foreign companies (onshore and offshore) involved in processing personal data.

In 2021, the government further limited internet freedom by launching a national code of conduct for people using social media[293] and revising a decree to add a provision that would restrict live streaming.[294]

Censorship and surveillance

Under the authoritarian political system, freedom of assembly, association, expression, press and religion, as well as civil society activism, is tightly restricted and controlled by the party despite legislation recognising civil and political rights in the Constitution.[295] Certain contents and topics related to curtailing political opposition, unfavourable to the party, corruption, and human rights issues are censored in various ways. In 2022, Vietnam ranked among the lowest globally at 174 out of 180 countries in the Press Freedom Index.[296] The country was also classified by Freedom House as "not free" in terms of the Internet with significant obstacles to access, limited content, and significant violations of user rights.[297]

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[292] Bach Thi Nha Nam. (2002). Finalise the legislation on personal data protection. Vietnam legislation research journal. 05 (453), 03/2022. Retrieved from http://lapphap.vn/Pages/TinTuc/211048/Hoan-thien-phap-luat-ve-bao-ve-du-lieu-ca-nhan.html

[293] QUYẾT ĐỊNH VỀ VIỆC BAN HÀNH BỘ QUY TẮC ỨNG XỬ TRÊN MẠNG XÃ HỘI [Decision on the Promulgation of a Code of Behaviour on Social Network]. (2021). https://thuvienphapluat.vn/van-ban/Cong-nghe-thong-tin/Quyet-dinh-874-QD-BTTTT-2021-Bo-Quy-tac-ung-xu-tren-mang-xa-hoi-478154.aspx

[294] T.H. Hguyen. (2021, July 11). Muốn livestream facebook, youtube phải thông báo thông tin liên hệ với Bộ TT&TT (đề xuất) [To livestream Facebook, Youtube must notify the contact information to the Ministry of Information and Communications (recommended)]. https://thuvienphapluat.vn/tintuc/vn/thoi-su-phap-luat/chinh-sach-moi/36497/muon-livestream-facebook-youtube-phai-thong-bao-thong-tin-lien-he-voi-bo-tt-tt-de-xuat

[295] Freedom house. (2022). Vietnam country report. Retrieved from https://freedomhouse.org/country/vietnam

[296] Reporter without borders. (2022). Vietnam country fact file. Retrieved from https://rsf.org/en/country/vietnam

[297] Freedom house. (2021) Freedom on the net report - Vietnam country. Retrieved from https://freedomhouse.org/country/vietnam/freedom-net/2021

Reported cases of internet censorship

Citizens enjoy more freedom in online discussions, and blogging and social media have become alternative sources of information and opinions from official public media. Bloggers, activists, and social media users have written about controversial subjects in Vietnam, such as human rights, democracy, religions, political figures, the communist party and the state. However, they became subjects under strict censorship and surveillance by authorities, especially those high-profile with many followers and readers.[298]

Multiple websites critical of the government are often inaccessible from Vietnam's locations, namely Dân Luận,[299] Luật Khoa,[300] The Vietnamese,[301] Việt Nam Thời báo,[302] Dân Làm Báo.[303] Unstable and unpredictable access is also reported for international websites such as Human Rights Watch (HRW), the Vietnamese editions of Radio Free Asia (RFA) and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC).[304]

The government had measures to force global technology firms to comply with government's requests on censorship, such as Facebook's local servers being taken offline in 2020.[305] According to the ministry of public security, in 2021, they have requested Facebook and Google to arrange 24/7 permanent staff to review content, removing 621 accounts, articles and videos with illegal content, and preventing access to 4,214 web servers that post harmful and toxic information from foreign countries.[306] In another report from the Ministry of Information and Communication (MIC), in 2021, MIC required Internet Service Providers to censor 3,000 websites regularly, preventing 2,000 websites and posts. The ministry also requires cross-border service providers (Facebook, Google, Apple) to remove harmful and toxic content; specifically, Facebook has blocked/removed more than 3,377 posts; Google has removed 13,141 videos from YouTube; Tiktok blocked/removed: 1,180 videos.[307]

[298] Mai Duong.(2017). Blogging Three Ways in Vietnam's Political Blogosphere. Contemporary Southeast Asia (39:2 ed.)

[299] https://www.danluan.org/

[300] https://www.luatkhoa.org/

[301] https://www.thevietnamese.org/

[302] https://vietnamthoibao.org/

[303] https://danlambaovn.blogspot.com/

[304] Freedom house. (2021) Freedom on the net report - Vietnam country. Retrieved from https://freedomhouse.org/country/vietnam/freedom-net/2021

[305] Reuter. (2020). Vietnam threatens to shut down Facebook over censorship requests - source. Retrieved from https://www.reuters.com/article/us-vietnam-facebook-shutdown-exclusive-idUKKBN27Z1MP

[306] National army news. (2021). The Ministry of Public Security removed and blocked thousands of websites with bad and malicious content. Retrieved from https://www.qdnd.vn/quoc-phong-an-ninh/tin-tuc/bo-cong-an-go-bo-ngan-chan-hang-nghin-trang-web-co-noi-dung-xau-doc-675020

[307] MIC. (2022). The Ministry of Information and Communications is determined to prevent and handle malicious information on social networks. Retrieved from https://mic.gov.vn/mic_2020/Pages/TinTuc/152518/Bo-TT-TT-kien-quyet-ngan-chan--xu-ly-cac-thong-tin-xau-doc-tren-mang-xa-hoi.html

Many journalists and bloggers have been arrested, assaulted and received criminal convictions.[308] Notable cases include Pham Thi Doan Trang,[309],[310] Nguyen Quoc Duc Vuong,[311] Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh[312], Tran Thi Nga,[313] among 200 people imprisoned.[314]

Network Landscape and Internet Penetration

Vietnam's internet penetration rate stood at 73.2% of the total population in 2022 with 72,1 million internet users. There were 3,4 million internet users increased during 2021-2022. Vietnamese spend on average 6 hours and 38 mins daily on the internet on all devices. 95.8% of users access the internet via mobile phone. In addition, there were 156 million cellular mobile connections in Vietnam at the start of 2022.[315]

In terms of fixed broadband internet service providers, three leading companies include VNPT (state-owned enterprise), Viettel (military-owned enterprise) and FPT (private - own enterprise), covering 92% of market share.[316] In terms of mobile service, Viettel, Mobiphone and Vinaphone are the three leaders, providing services to 98.1% of the market.[317] Data from Ookla of July 2022 showed that median download speed via cellular mobile connection stood at 38.23 Mbps, ranked 47/140 countries while the speed provided by fixed broadband internet connection was 76.16 Mbps, ranked 45/182 countries.[318]

In terms of pricing, Vietnam is one of the countries with cheapest Internet rates for both fixed and mobile internet. Average monthly package cost for broadband internet in Vietnam is

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[308] Mai Duong.(2017). Blogging Three Ways in Vietnam's Political Blogosphere. Contemporary Southeast Asia (39:2 ed.)

[309] The Washington Post. (2021). Vietnam jails its 'most famous activist' for nine years Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/vietnam-press-freedom-pham-doan-trang/2021/12/14/8ed0f008-57e4-11ec-8396-5552bef55c3c_story.html

[310] National army news. (2021). After Pham Thi Doan Trang's trial court. Retrieved from https://cand.com.vn/Chong-dien-bien-hoa-binh/lai-tung-hoa-mu-sau-phien-toa-xet-xu-pham-thi-doan-trang-i638333/

[311] Reuter. (2020).Vietnam jails Facebook user for eight years over 'anti-state' posts.Retrieved from https://www.reuters.com/article/us-vietnam-security-trial-idUSKBN24814T

[312] The New York times. (2016). Vietnam arrests Mother Mushroom, a top blogger, for criticizing government. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/12/world/asia/vietnam-arrest-blogger-mother-mushroom.html

[313] CPJ.(2020). Freedom at a high cost for Vietnamese blogger Tran Thi Nga.Retrieved from https://cpj.org/2020/02/vietnam-blogger-jail-exile-tran-thi-nga/

[314] Bass, Thomas. (2017). Censorship in Vietnam: Brave New World. University of Massachusetts Press. ISBN 978-1625342959.

[315] Data reportal. (2022). Digital 2020: Vietnam report. Retrived from https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2022-vietnam

[316] Tienphong news. (2020). New trend in cable internet market. Retrieved from https://tienphong.vn/he-lo-ve-lan-gio-moi-tren-thi-truong-internet-cap-quang-post1276350.tpo

[317] Vietstock. (2020). Technology - Telecommunication industry report 2020. Retrieved from https://finance.vietstock.vn/downloadedoc/7540

[318] Ookla. (2022). Speedtest global index. Retrieved from https://www.speedtest.net/global-index

$10.81, ranked 13 out of 220 countries.[319] The average price of 1GB of mobile data in Vietnam is 0.61$, ranked 37 out of 223 countries.[320]

Social media is widely used in Vietnam with 76.95 million users. Facebook, Zalo, Tiktok and Instagram are the most popular social media platforms in Vietnam. Vietnam is providing 70.4 million users to Facebook and 63.5 million users to Youtube, 39.91 million users to Titok, proving a highly promising and dynamic market for advertising and e-commerce.[321] Vietnam's digital economy is projected to exceed US$43 billion by 2025 as the country continues to pursue projects in e-government, internet of things, smart cities, financial technology, artificial intelligence etc.[322]

Over the last few years, the Vietnamese government has made great efforts in pushing the industry 4.0 agenda forward. The ongoing regulatory focus on digital transformation including e-government has helped the nation navigate the COVID-19 health crisis through its timely and evidence-based response and resulted in a significant rise in online public services.

Findings of internet censorship in Vietnam

The aim of this study was to understand whether and to what extent censorship events occurred in Vietnam during the testing period from January 1st to June 30th, 2022.

The raw data in this period from OONI included 301,847 tests. However, we have to filter and remove the ones that are untrusted. Normally tests of blocked sites will return a page with the same title. We counted 1108 blocked websites across 10 different networks of autonomous system number (ASN): of which 3 ASN's networks belong to Viettel (Viettel CHT company, Viettel Group, Viettel Corporation), a military-owned internet service provider; 3 ASN's networks of state-owned enterprises (VNPT, MOBIFONE, SaiGon Tourist); 1 foreign joint venture enterprise (Vietnammobile); 1 private-owned enterprise (FPT Telecom); 2 foreign enterprises (Home Credit Vietnam Finance, Softnet). Networks with suspicious signals that blocked users are networks that are heavily regulated by the government. There are 2 suppliers that do not block users who are foreign businesses. However, the number of tests is too small. So, it is impossible to confirm anything and it depends on the user to access which category is restricted by the government. The six main internet and mobile service providers of Vietnam blocked users; these are VNPT, Viettel, FPT, Saigon Tourist, MOBIFONE and Vietnam Mobile.

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[319]   Cable.co.uk.   (2022).   Global   broadband   pricing   2022.   Retrieved   from https://www.cable.co.uk/broadband/pricing/worldwide-comparison/
[320]   Cable.co.uk.   (2022).Worldwide   Mobile   Data   2022.   Retrieved   from https://www.cable.co.uk/mobiles/worldwide-data-pricing/#pricing
[321]   Data   reportal.   (2022).   Digital   2020:   Vietnam   report.   Retrived   from https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2022-vietnam
[322] World Bank. (2020). Digital Economy in Vietnam: Building the Foundations for Future Growth. Retrieved   from https://blogs.worldbank.org/eastasiapacific/digital-economy-vietnam-building-foundations-future-growth

Figure: Percentage of no blocking and suspect of blocking by internet providers during the testing period.
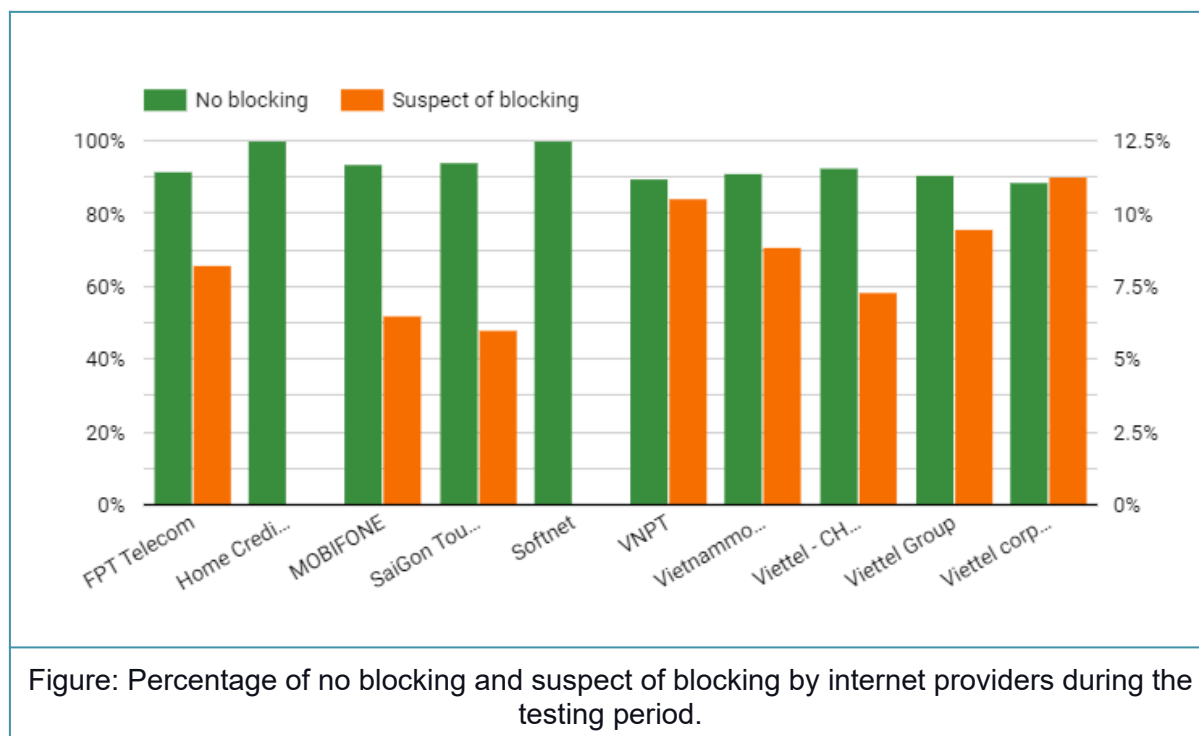
Note that the terms used in this report refer to as follows:
- Blocking: DNS confirmed
- No blocking: OK
- Suspect of blocking: DNS inconsistent or DNS confirmed
- Untrusted: No results on HTTP testing

Censorship of Websites

Websites that are actively censored are broken down into 4 categories including:

· Human rights

· Pornography

· Political criticism

· News Media (mainly foreign sites)

Figure 1: The highest suspicion-blocked categories in Vietnam
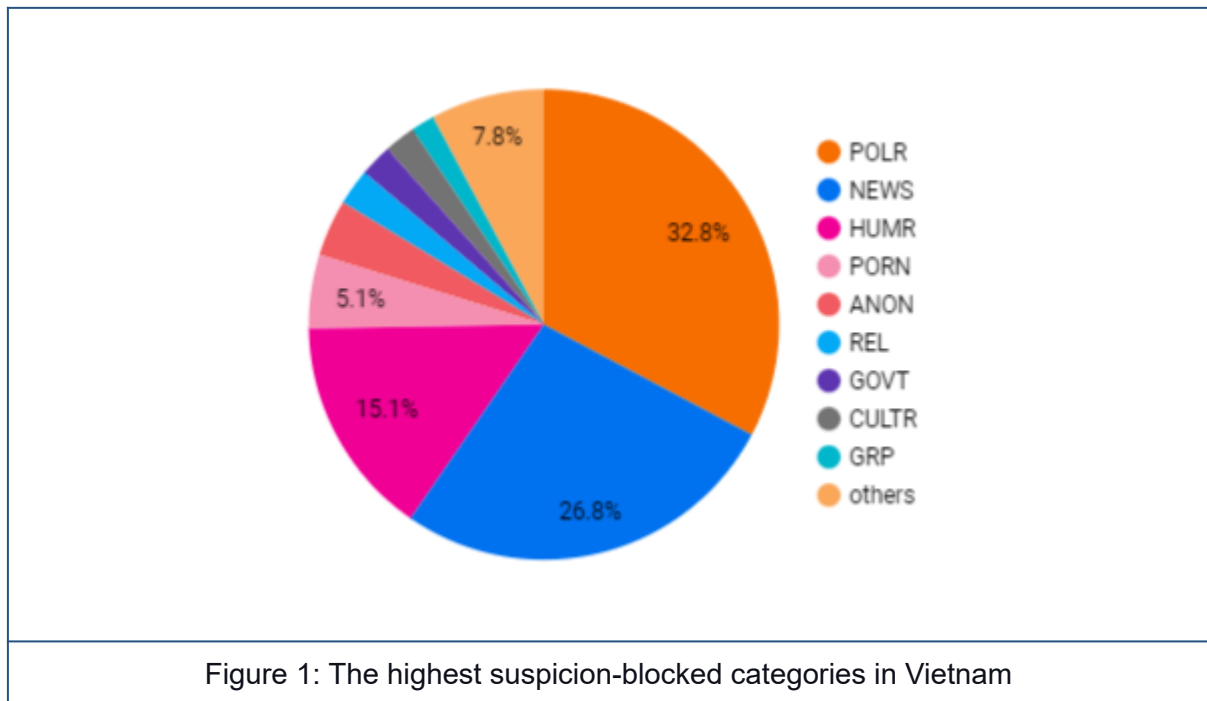
The percentage of users who can't be accessed with political criticism category is the highest with 34%, followed by foreign news sites with 27.9%. In third place, it is human rights issues category and fourth place is pornography sites.

Table 1: Number of blocked pages and blocked times by categories

Categories	ISPs	Number of inaccessible pages	Total of blocking times
News Media	VNPT,Viettel, Mobifone, FPT, Saigon Tourist	57	4360
Pornography	VNPT, FPT, Viettel	11	824
Political Criticism	VNPT, FPT, Viettel, Vietnam Mobile, Mobifone	54	5324
Human Rights Issues	VNPT, FPT, Viettel, Vietnam Mobile, Mobifone	38	2460

Political Criticism

54 pages on political criticism were blocked during the testing period by and up to 4360 blocking times. Network operators may use DNS tampering and block IP addresses of these websites to blacklist and making them inaccessible. FPT and Viettel used DNS tampering whistle VNPT almost always uses TLS 'connection timeout and close'. The result of blocking over time is a fluctuating variable.

Figure 2: Internet censorship methods of providers in Vietnam.
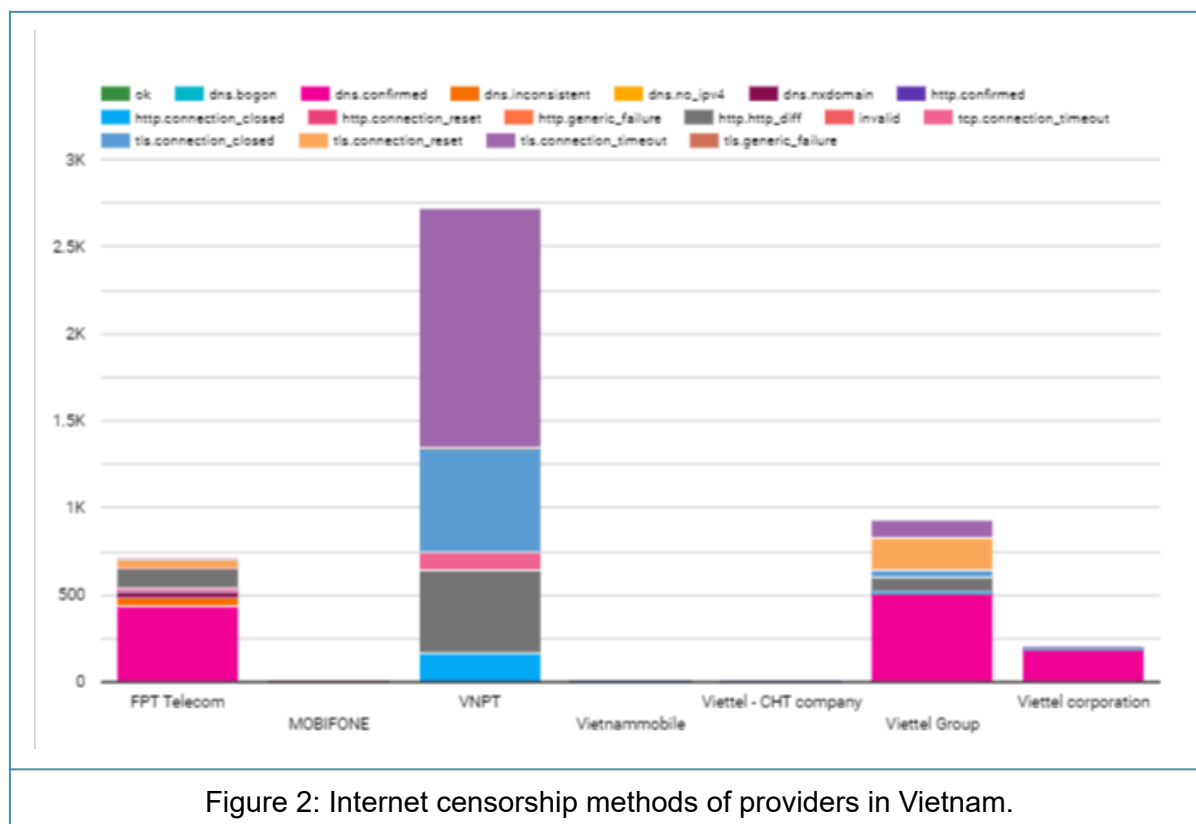
We choose three sites with a similar number of blocking time for further analysis, including:

- Doan Trang page(http://www.phamdoantrang.com/)[323],
- Ba Sam (https://anhbasam.wordpress.com/)[324] and
- Viet Nam Times (https://vietnamthoibao.org/)[325]

The Doan Trang page is completely blocked by FPT Telecom and Viettel networks. However, VNPT opened for access from 16 June to 21 June 2022. At that time, there is an event on Human Rights Council to Hold its Fiftieth Regular Session from 13 June to 8 July 2022. The VNPT provider may have changed the moderation policy of this site and opened access to users. Until now they are still open access.

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[323] Doan Trang page is a blog of a Vietnamese blogger, journalist, publisher, and democracy activist arrested by Government.
[324] Ba Sam page is a blog of a Vietnamese blogger arrested.
[325] The Vietnam Independent Journalists Association is an "independent journalistic professional" association, a "civil society" organization.
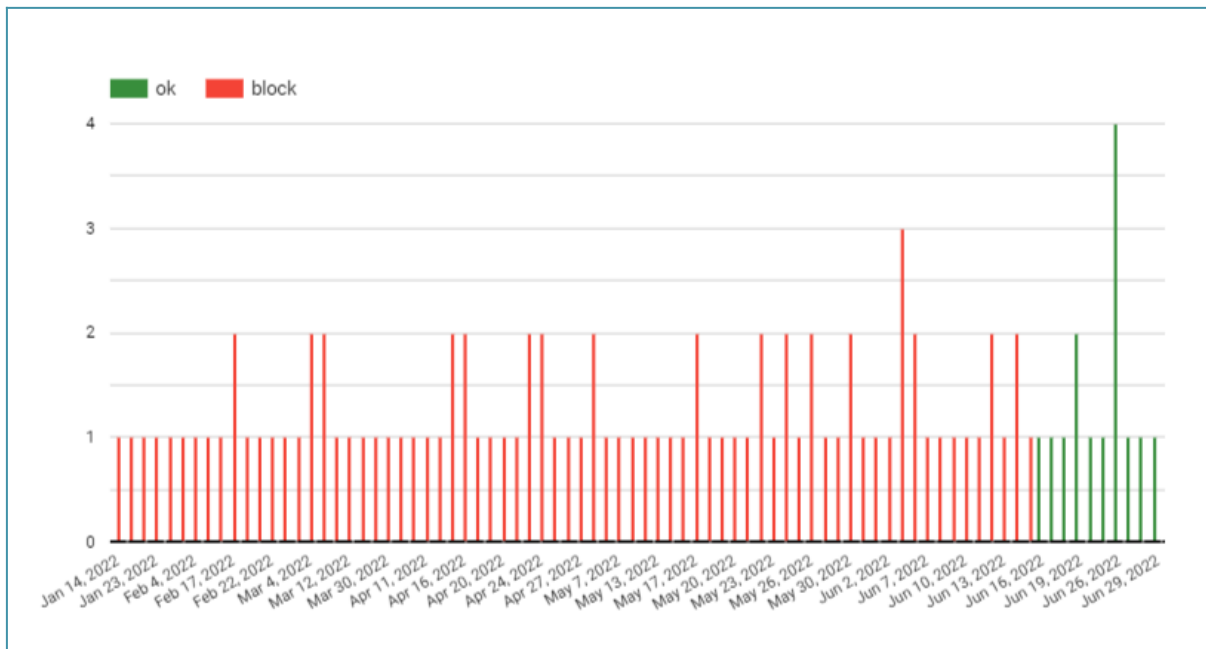
Figure 3: Doan Trang page blocked over half of 2022.
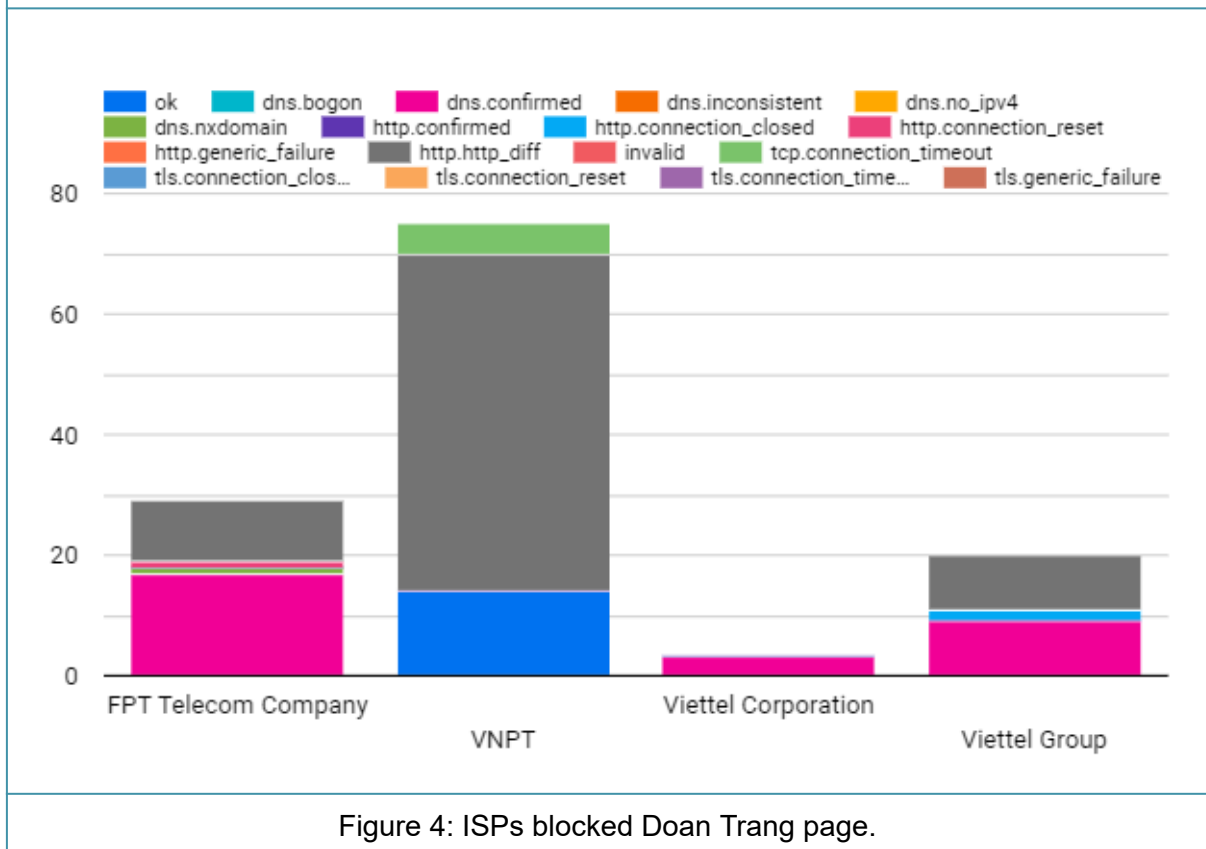
Figure 4: ISPs blocked Doan Trang page.

Figure 5: Dates for opening access by VNPT network.
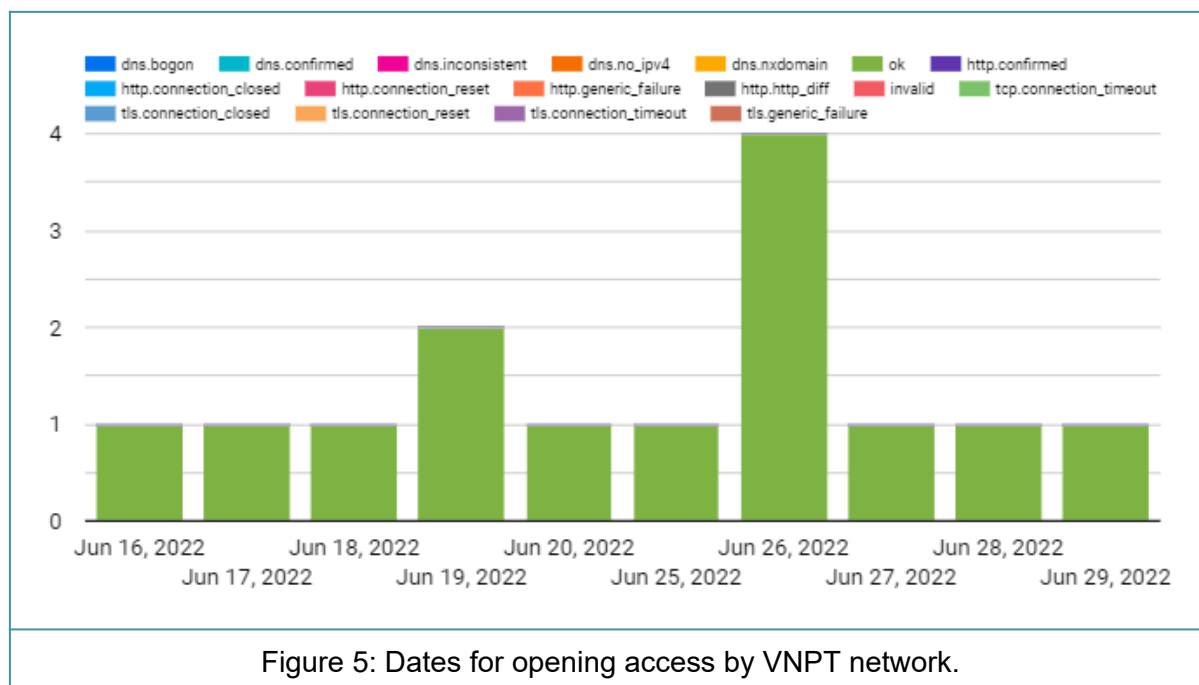
For the two websites of Viet Nam Thoi Bao (Viet Nam Times) and Ba Sam, the number of accesses to the above two pages of VNPT and Viettel networks is less than FPT Telecom network, although the number of tests is more than FPT.

Figure 6: ISPs blocked Viet Nam Times and Ba Sam page.
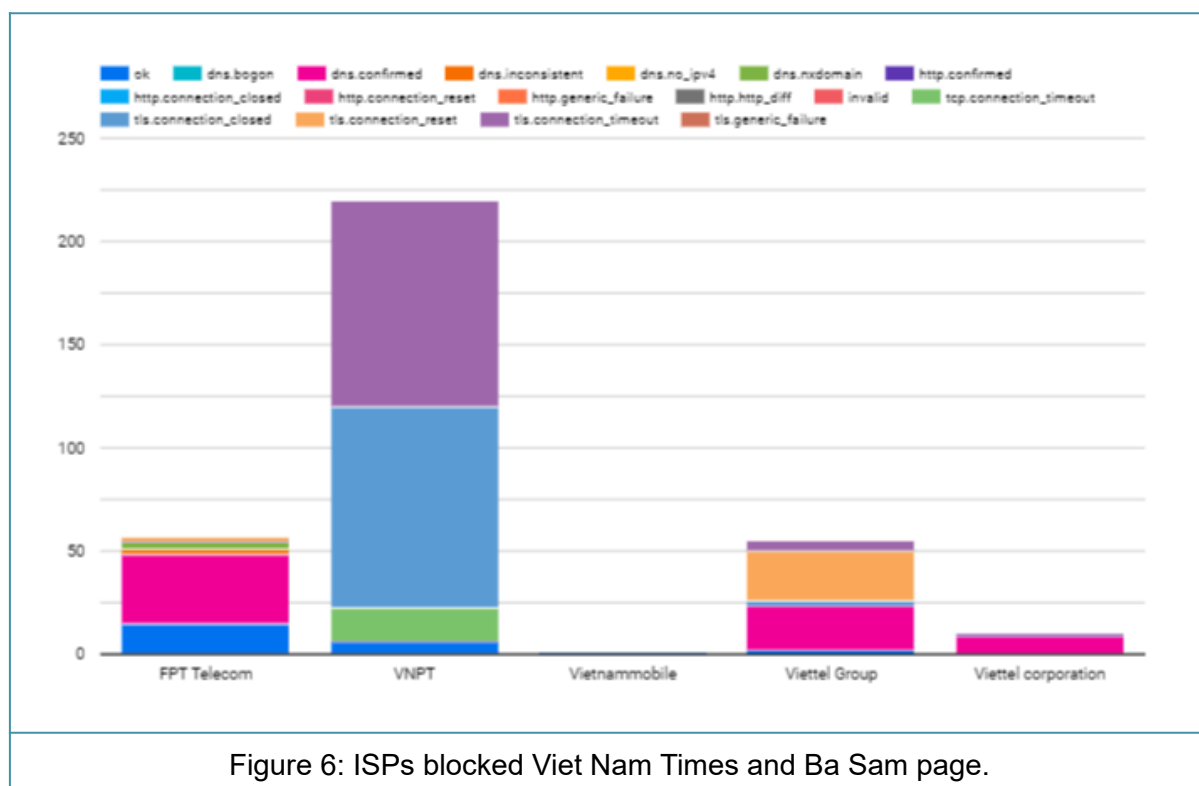
VNPT is a state-owned enterprise and Viettel is a military internet service provider. So, we can understand that these two ISPs are under the strict management and supervision of the Vietnamese party and government.
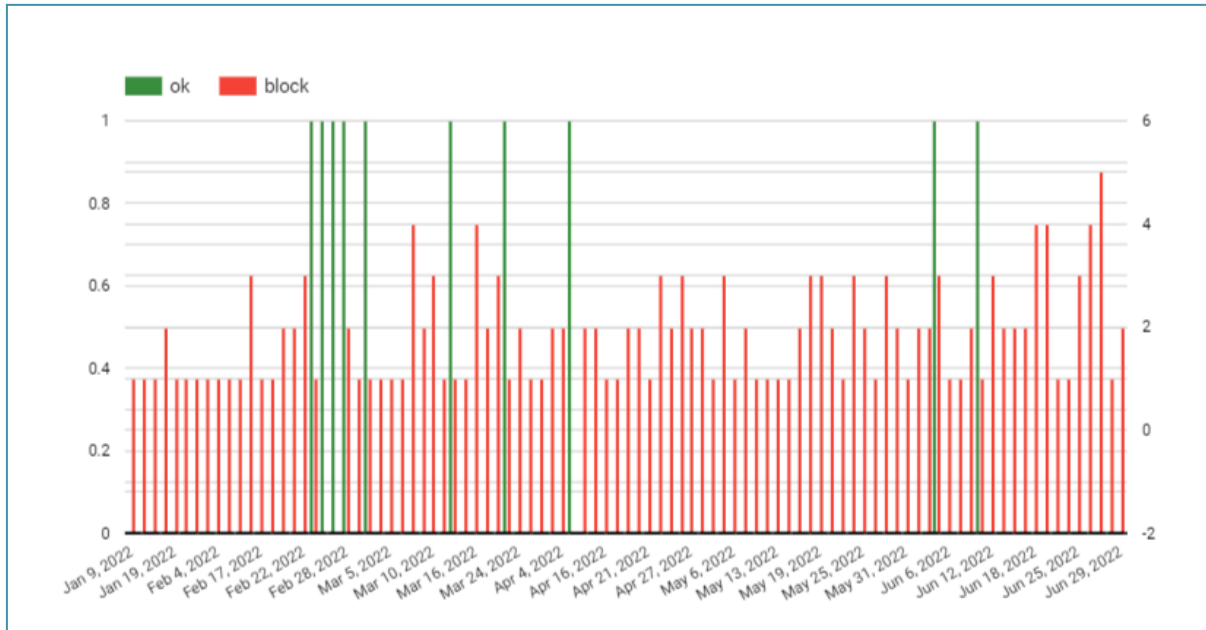
Figure 7: Blocking time series of Ba Sam website.
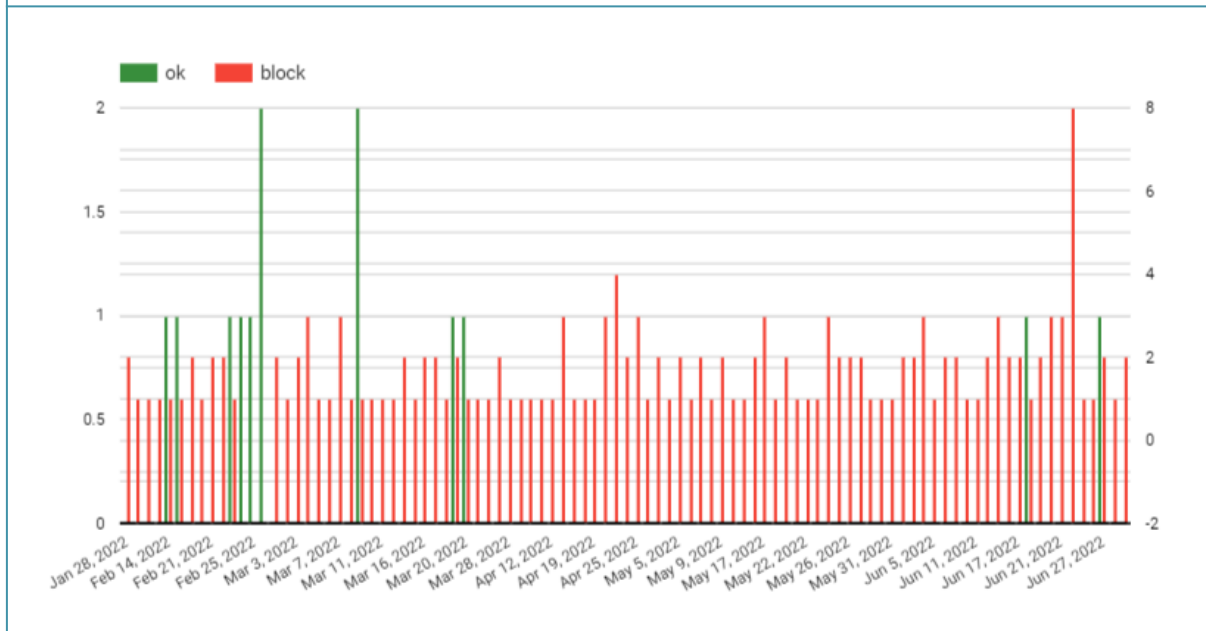
Figure 8: Blocking time series of Viet Nam Times page.

News Media

Broadly news media sites appear to be accessible, except for some international news media outlets. The ISPs mainly use the method of putting IP addresses in the list of blocked sites. Radio Free Asia (www.rfa.org) and British Broadcasting network (www.bbc.com) are two examples for further analysis.

VNPT often used TCP and TLS blocks whereas FPT and Viettel used DNS tampering to block RFA. Of the 334 tests performed upon the RFA page, 257 times the site was blocked. Access times were scattered during the testing period.
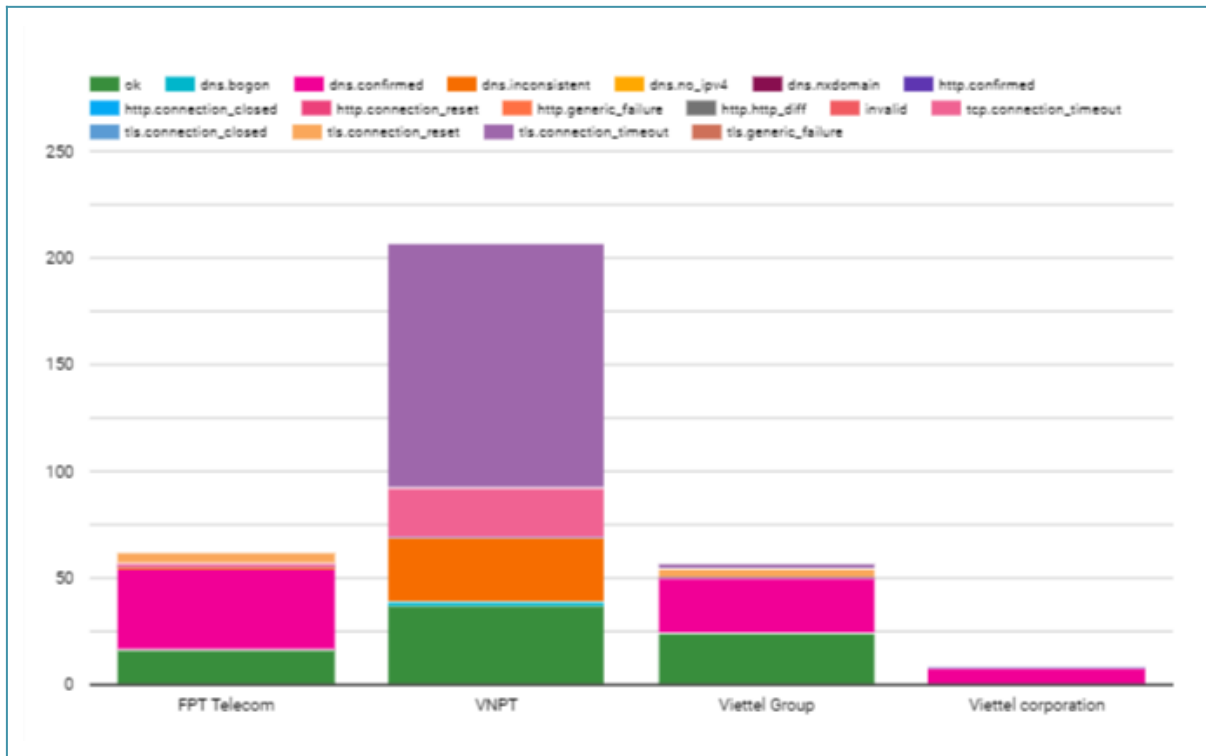
Figure 9: ISPs blocked the RFA page.
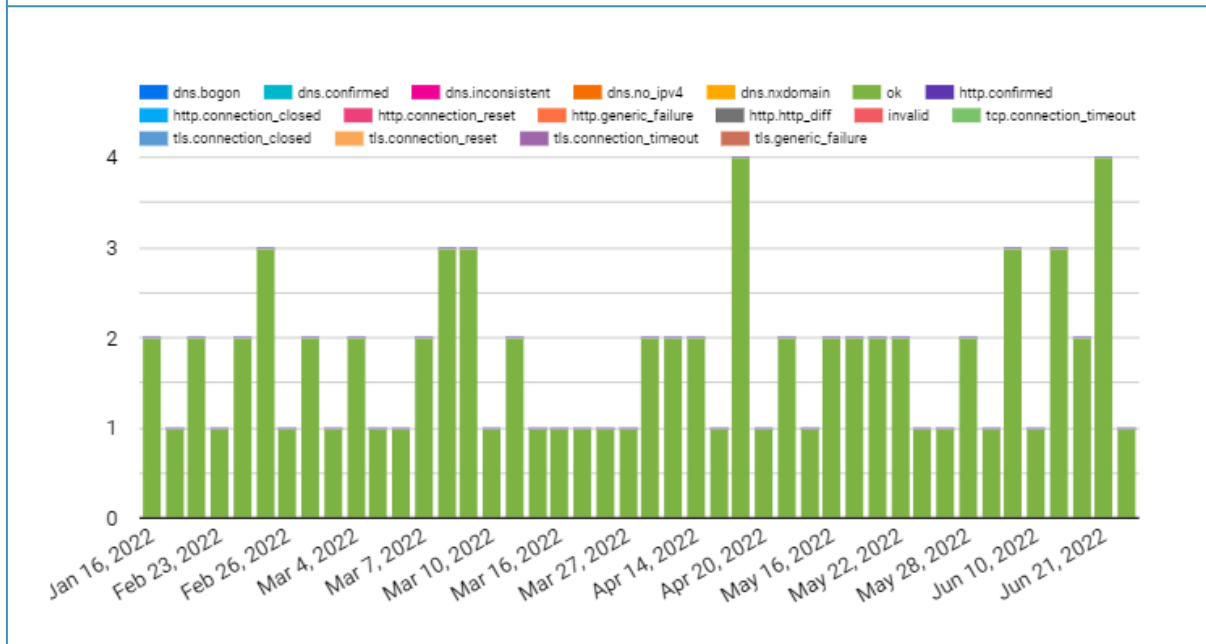
Figure 10: Allowing access in half of 2022 of The RFA page.

The BBC was tested over 892 times; however, the blockage was higher at 834 times during the testing period. VNPT mainly uses TLS and TCP blocking methods while Viettel and FPT use DNS level interference. The site was briefly accessible during the testing period 58 times with scattered accessibility in February and March. Significantly in May, it was completely blocked.
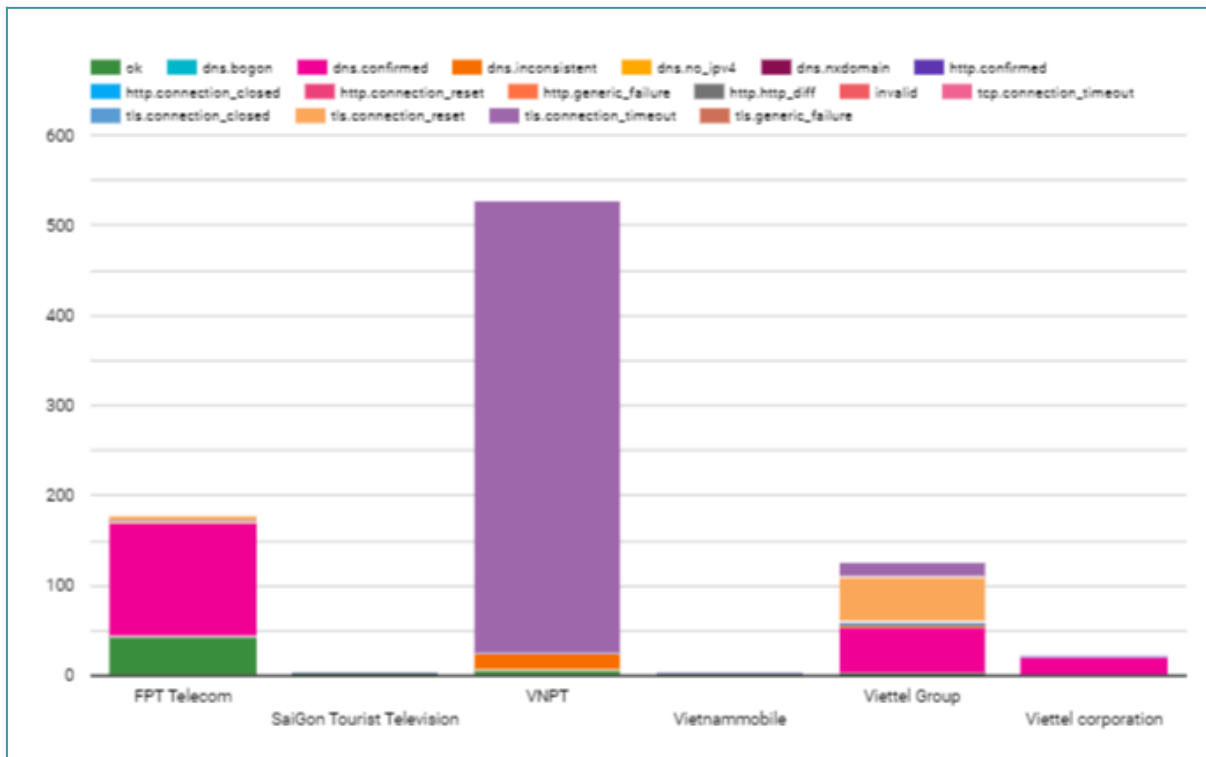
Figure 11: ISPs blocking on www.bbc.com
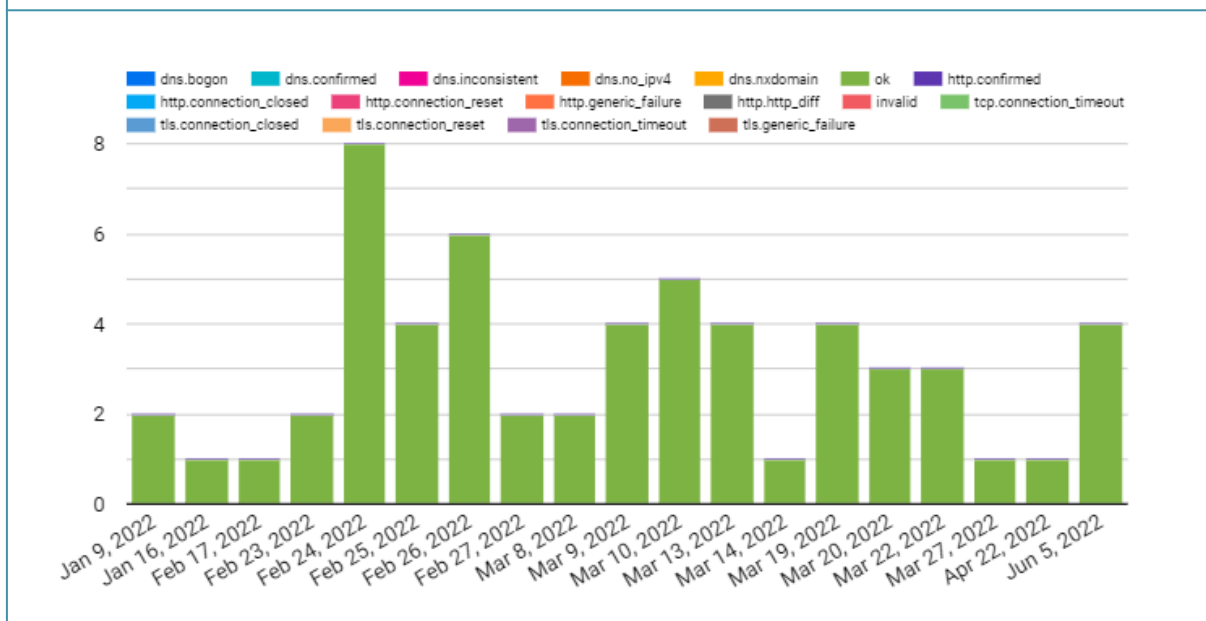
Figure 12: Allowing access in half of 2022 of the www.bbc.com page.

Figure 13: Blocking of www.bbc.com page in May 2022
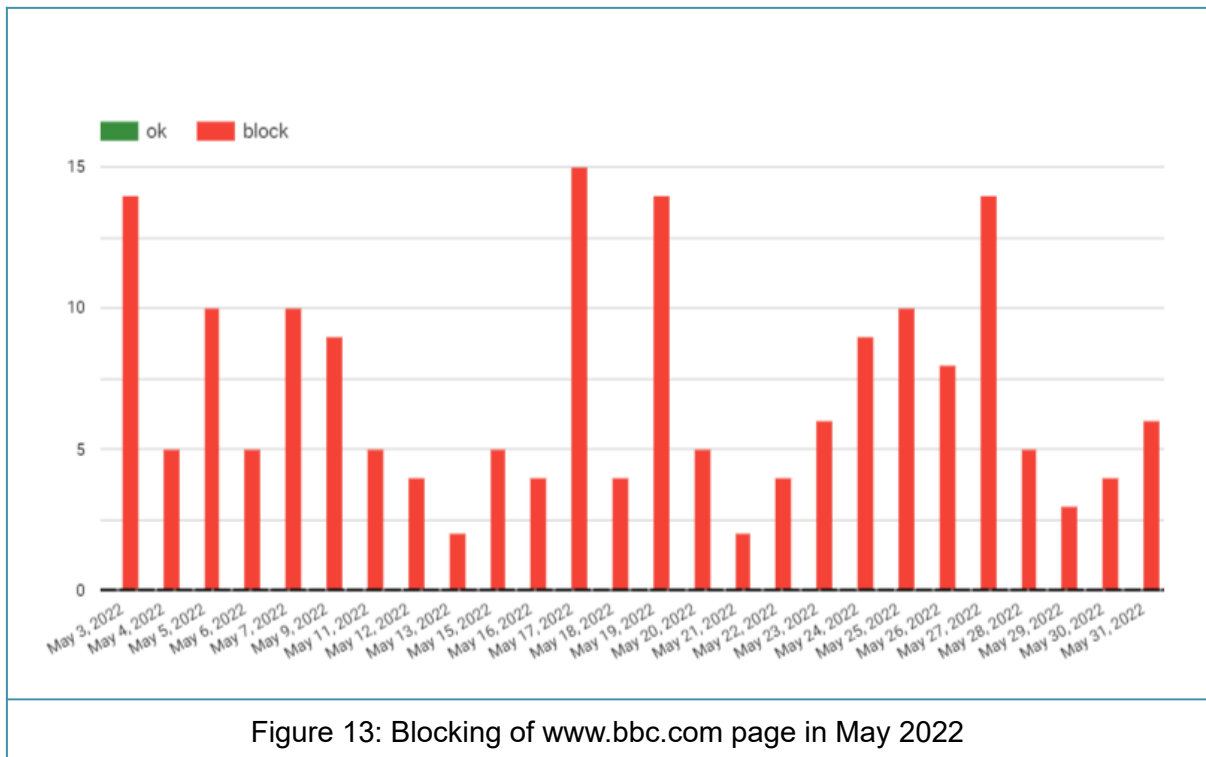
With local news media, most are subject to censorship before publication. Therefore, all newspapers are accessible with very small instances of inaccessibility to confirm censorship.

	domain	inaccessibility ▾	accessibility
1.	news.zing.vn	4	177
2.	docbao.vn	2	182
3.	baoquocte.vn	2	177
4.	congan.com.vn	1	181
5.	thvl.vn	1	179
6.	vovworld.vn	1	182
7.	vietnamnet.vn	1	181
8.	plo.vn	1	181
9.	vnexpress.net	1	182

Figure 14: Local news media in Vietnam with internet inaccessibility

Pornography

For the pornography category, 11 pornography pages were found blocked on VNPT, FPT and Viettel networks. There were 1,155 tests, of which 824 test results were not accessible and only 412 were accessible. Accessibility to pornography was restricted twice as much as when it was accessible. Additionally, access was scattered between February to June.

Figure 15: ISPs blocking on pornography category

Figure 16: Blocking time series of pornography category
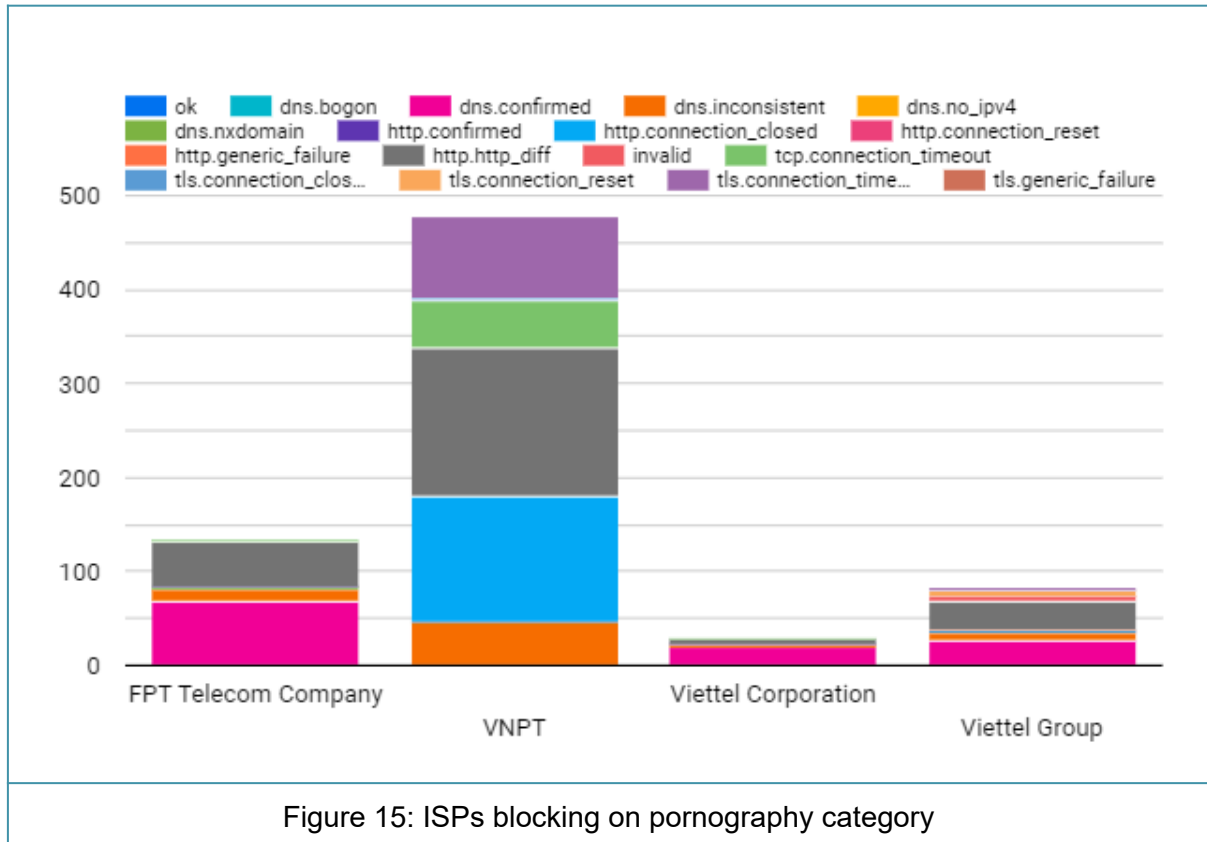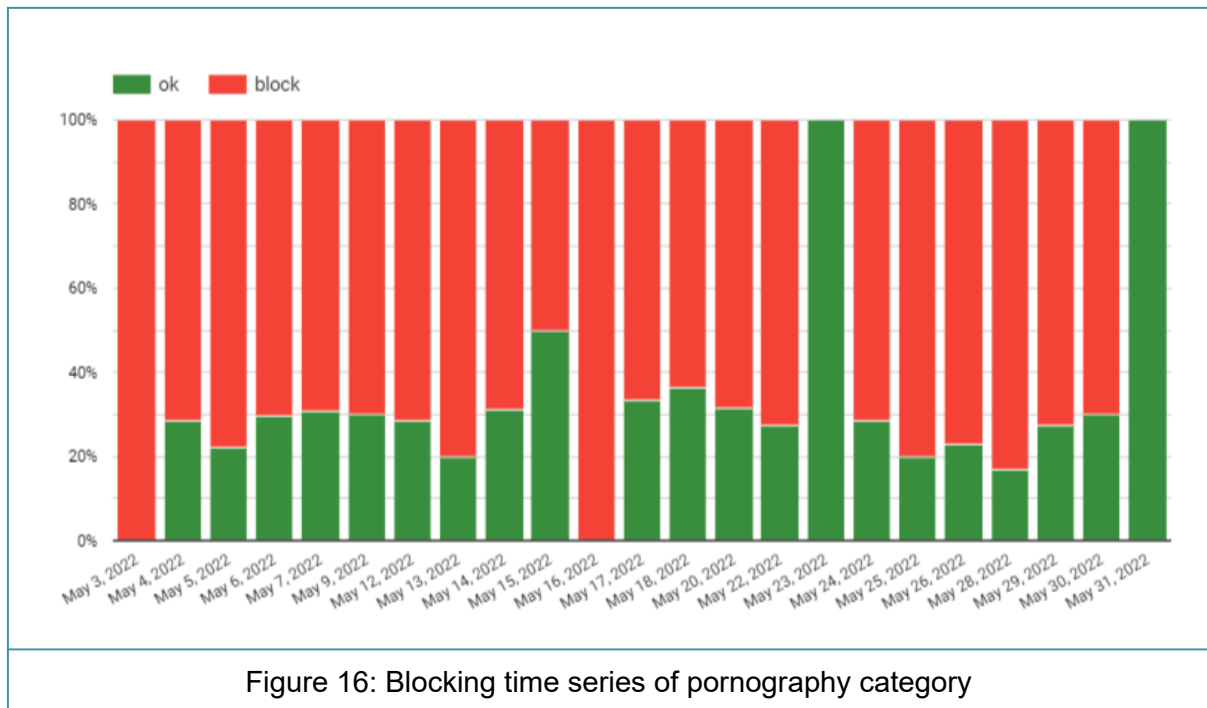
Table 2. Blocking percentage of pages in pornography category

Pages	Percentage of blocking
https://www.youporn.com/	11.2 %
https://www.xvideos.com/	11.2 %
https://www.pornhub.com/	10.9 %
http://www.wetplace.com/	10.8 %
https://beeg.com/	10.7 %
http://vnanchoi.ca/	10.4 %
http://sacduc.com/	9.3 %
https://sex-hay.pro/	9 %
http://ww7.gockhuatviet.com/	8 %
https://shoptraivip.com	7.8 %
https://www.coithienthai.com/	0.7 %

Human rights issues

Human rights websites experienced a total of 9,241 tests, in which the number of times blocked was 2406 (26.04 % of the time). The total number of blocked pages on human rights was 38 pages. Among them, vnhrdmay.org (https://vnhrdmay11.org/) and mec.org (http://mec.org.vn/vi/) is completely blocked 100% by VNPT, FPT, Vietnam mobile and Viettel

providers with the invalid status which means the presence of network components ("middleboxes"). So, these providers could be responsible for internet censorship, surveillance, and/or traffic manipulation.

Next are the two pages of luatkhoa[326] (https://www.luatkhoa.org/) and the88project[327] (https://the88project.org/) are inaccessible to over 80%. ISPs also implemented different restrictive methods. FPT and Viettel mainly used DNS tampering while VNPT mainly used IP address blocking.
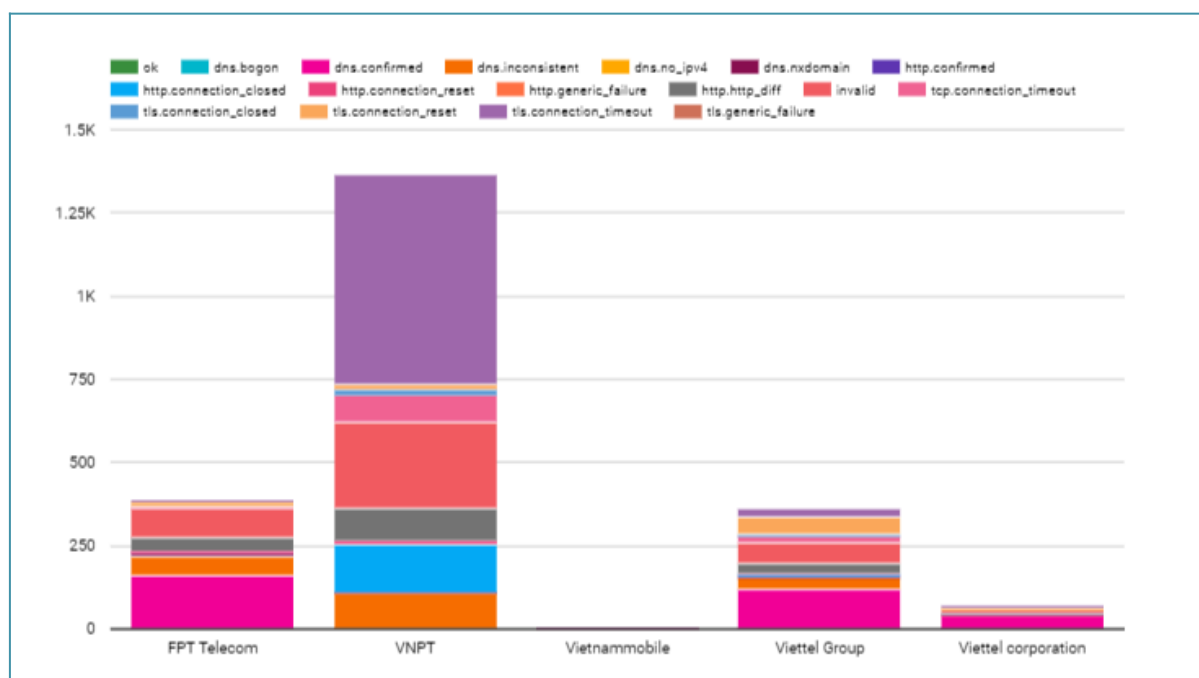

Figure 17: ISPs blocking on human rights issues category
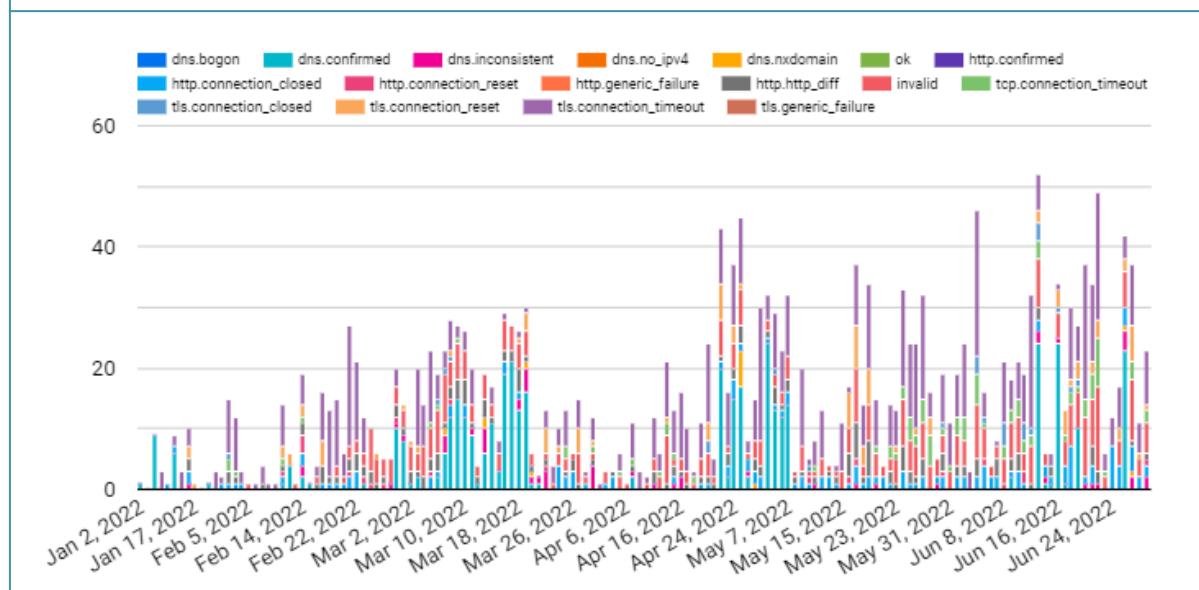
Figure 18: Blocking time series of human rights issues category

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[326] A legal publication with the purpose of providing information and legal knowledge to the community, discussing legal issues as well as activities of expertise of law practitioners and law students, promoting legal study and research in Vietnam.
[327] A website on profiles of activists

In OONI's data, the UN's human rights page (https://www.ohchr.org/) and Freedom house (https://freedomhouse.org/) page were not blocked, but there were still some days of suspicion by two ISPs; VNPT and Viettel.

Table 3: Information of date, pages and ISPs on internet censorship in Vietnam

Date	ISPs blocked	Pages
January 8, 2022	Viettel	https://freedomhouse.org
March 11, 2022	VNPT	https://www.ohchr.org/
April 7, 2022	Viettel	https://freedomhouse.org
April 15, 2022	VNPT	https://www.ohchr.org/
April 16, 2022	VNPT	https://www.ohchr.org/
April 22, 2022	Viettel	https://freedomhouse.org
April 24, 2022	Viettel	https://freedomhouse.org
May 4, 2022	Viettel	https://freedomhouse.org
May 5, 2022	Viettel	https://freedomhouse.org
May 6, 2022	Viettel	https://freedomhouse.org
May 7, 2022	Viettel	https://freedomhouse.org
May 20, 2022	VNPT	https://www.ohchr.org/
May 29, 2022	VNPT	https://www.ohchr.org/
June 13, 2022	Viettel	https://freedomhouse.org
June 16, 2022	Viettel	https://freedomhouse.org
June 19, 2022	Viettel	https://freedomhouse.org
June 26, 2022	Viettel	https://www.ohchr.org/ https://freedomhouse.org
June 29, 2022	Viettel	https://www.ohchr.org/

We choose two sites; Luatkhoa (https://www.luatkhoa.org/) and the88project (https://the88project.org/) to examine in more detail.

For Luatkhoa, the total number of tests were 176 times, most of them blocked when running the test. The number of blocking times were up to 167 by the three main providers, VNPT, FPT and Viettel. However, VNPT and Viettel completely blocked this site. Only FPT opened 7 days in the first half of 2022.
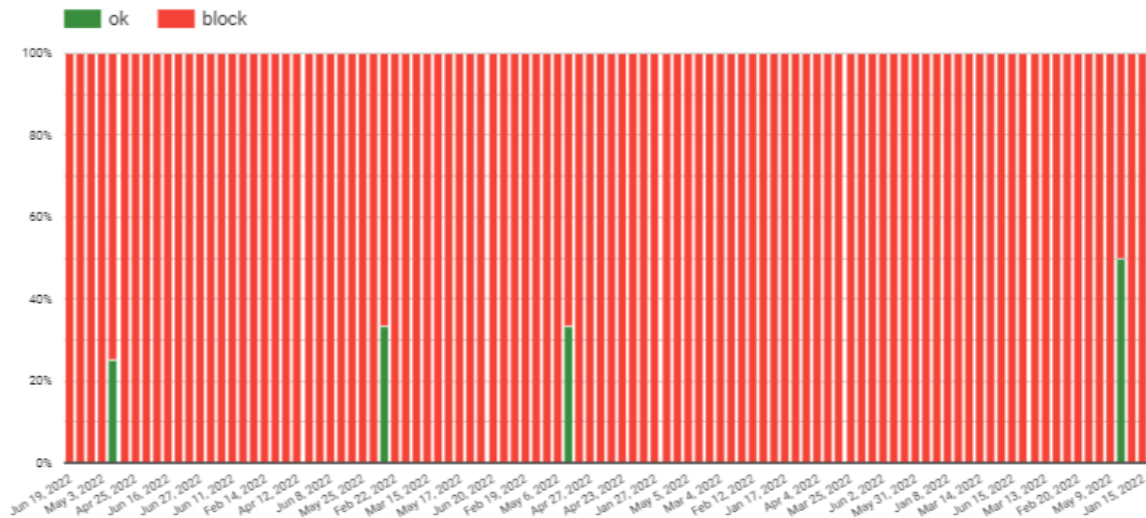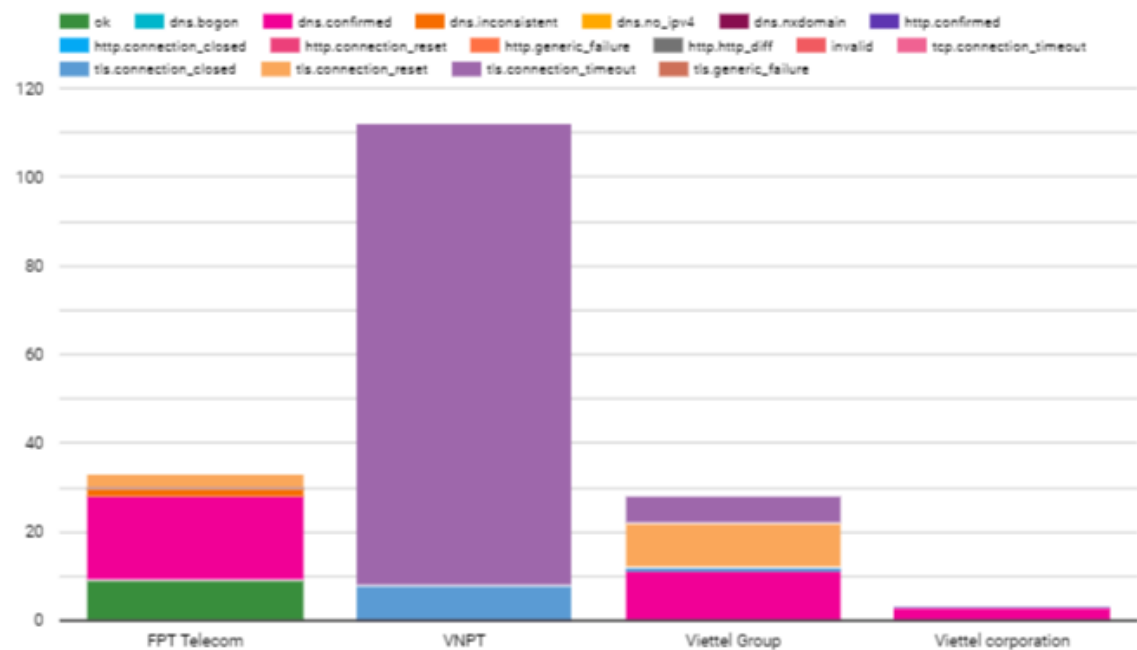
Figure 19: Blocking time series of Luatkhoa page

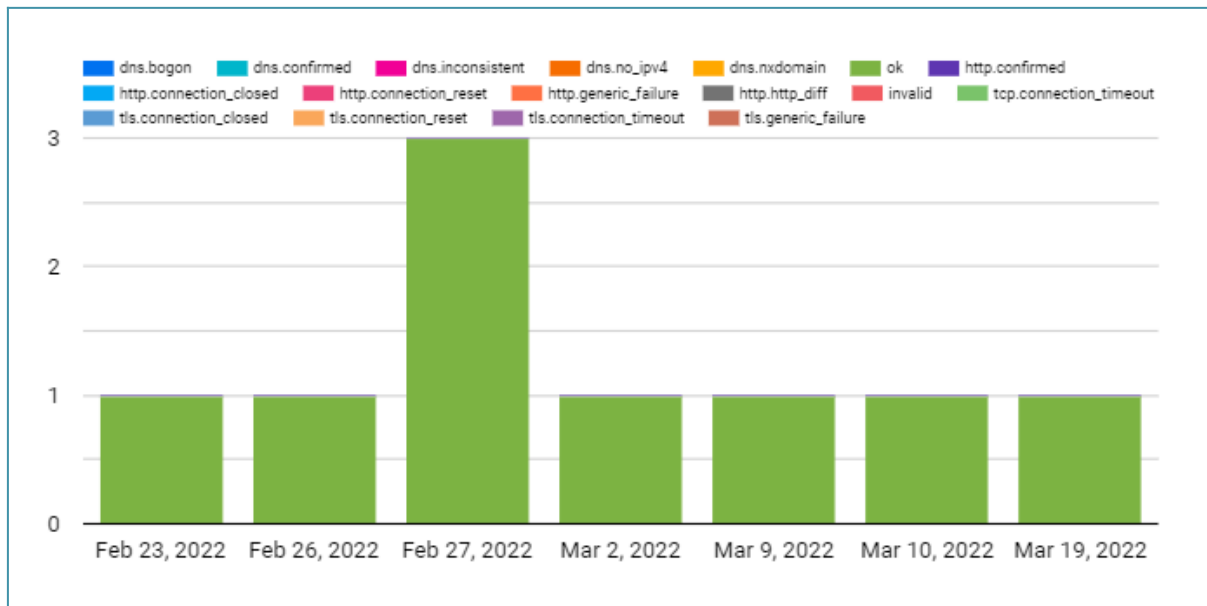Figure 20: Blocking of providers in Vietnam on Luatkhoa page

Figure 21: Allowing access in half of 2022 of FPT provider on Luatkhoa page.

The88project (https://the88project.org/) is a site with a database of activists and information about arrest and harassment incidents. The88project was tested on Vietnam mobile, VNPT, FPT and Viettel networks with 165 tests, but only 19 corresponding to 11.52% of them can be accessed. Accessibility to the site was found through VNPT and FPT networks while it was completely blocked by Viettel and Vietnam mobile. Network operators VNPT and Viettel used IP address blocks while FPT used DNS level interference. VNPT and FPT took turns opening the internet port on the following days:

Table 4: Information of date, ISPs on internet allowing access in Vietnam

Date	ISPs' allowing access
February 5, 2022	FPT
February 13, 2022	VNPT
February 24, 2022	FPT
February 26, 2022	FPT
February 27, 2022	FPT
March 9, 2022	FPT
March 13, 2022	FPT
March 20, 2022	FPT
April 12, 2022	VNPT
April 14, 2022	VNPT
April 17, 2022	VNPT

April 19, 2022	VNPT
April 20, 2022	VNPT
May 9, 2022	VNPT
June 5, 2022	VNPT
June 18, 2022	VNPT

Blocking of Instant Messaging Apps

Instant Messaging services were consistently accessible via web connectivity and mobile applications. WhatsApp, Facebook, Zalo, Line, Instagram, Tiktok and several social networks appeared to be accessible on all tested networks during the testing period.

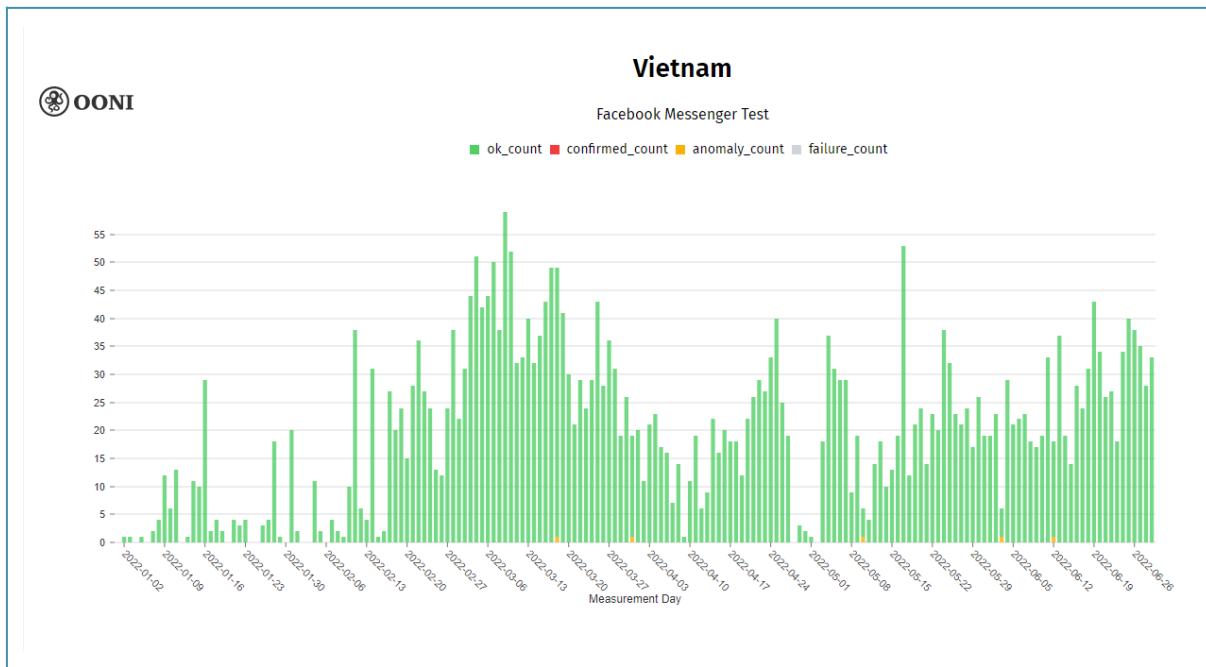Figure 22: WhatsApp measure on OONI Math tool
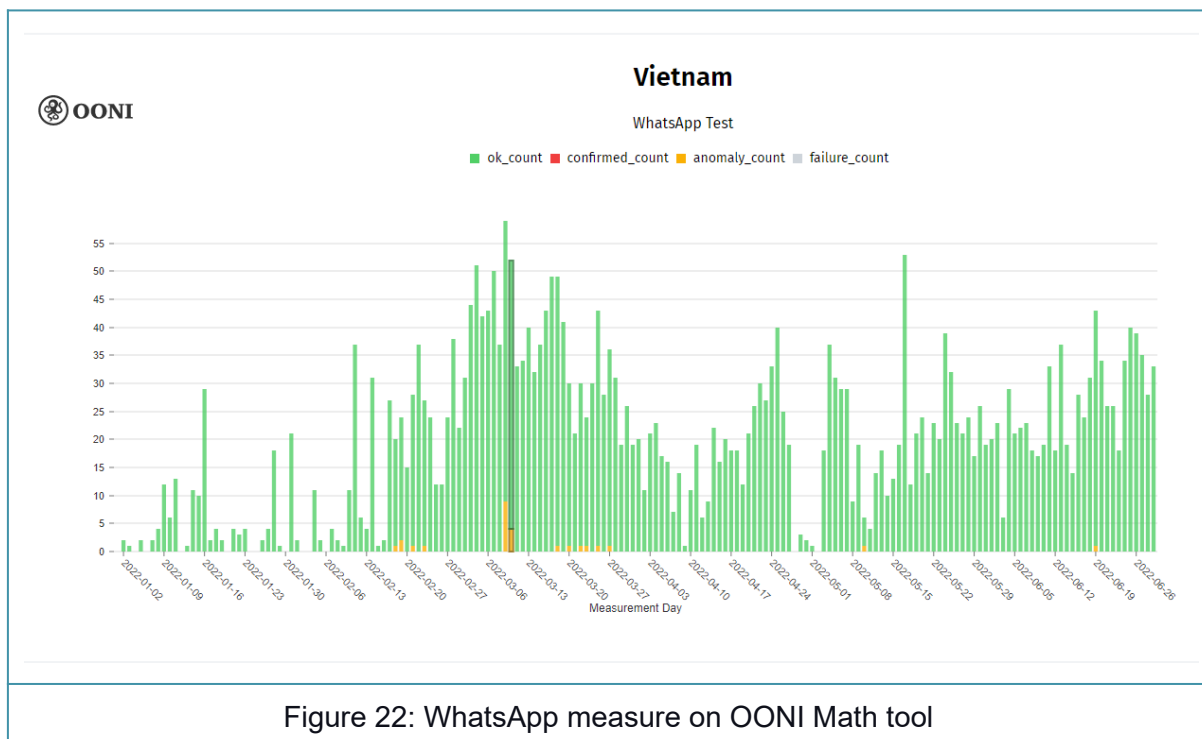
Figure 23: Messenger measure on raw data from OONI

Blocking of Circumvention Tools

When looking at anonymization and circumvention tools, we find that in Vietnam the Psiphon test is not censored while the Tor test has signs of censorship starting from February to June of 2022.
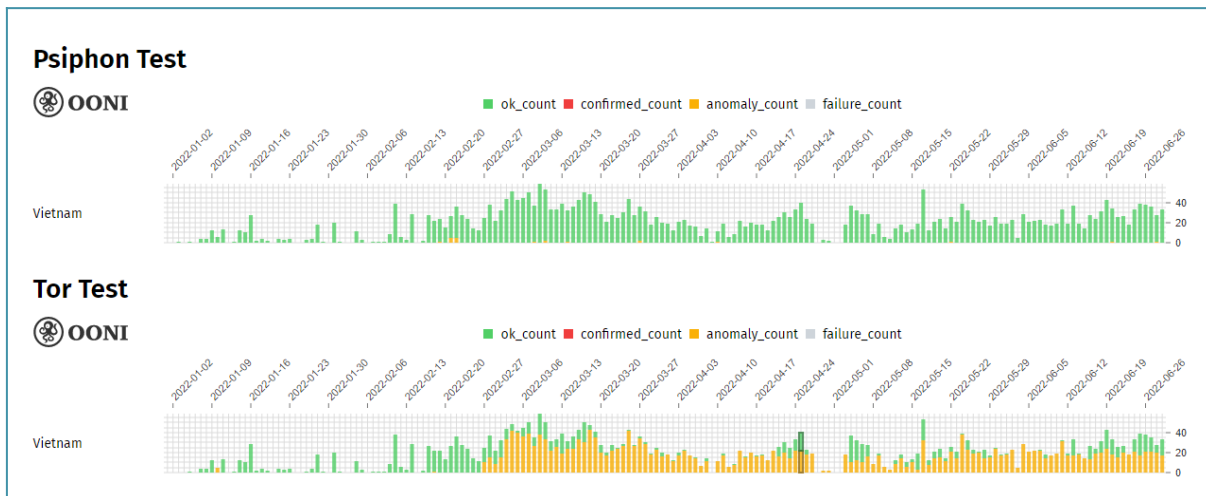

Figure 24: Reachability of Censorship Circumvention Tools of Psiphon and Tor

Acknowledgement of Limitations

"The examination of the findings of this study is limited to network measurements that were collected from 1 January to 30 June 2022 to examine the most recent censorship trends and events.

The findings of this study are limited to a total of 1108 URLs tested for censorship and shall not be deemed as an exhaustive list of websites affected by censorship. Websites fall outside of the *Vietnam* test list *https://github.com/citizenlab/test-lists/blob/master/lists/vn.csv* and Citizen Lab Global test list <https://github.com/citizenlab/test-lists/blob/master/lists/global.csv> are not tested and their state of censorship are unable to be verified through OONI Web Connectivity test. Should you wish to contribute by reviewing the test list, you may refer to the guidelines prepared by OONI at <https://ooni.org/get-involved/contribute-test-lists>.

Although the network measurements were collected from 18 local vantage points in Vietnam, the running of OONI software testing was not consistent across all networks. This study focuses on the main ASNs with higher counts of measurements collected."

Conclusion

Multiple censorship events have been reported in Vietnam over the last decade. The objective of this study is to gain a better understanding of internet censorship events in Vietnam through the collection and analysis of network measurements. To this end, OONI software tests were run across the country with the aim of collecting and analysing network measurement data that could help examine whether sites, instant messaging apps, and censorship circumvention tools were blocked. Some of the tests that were also run are designed to examine whether systems ("middle boxes") that could be responsible for censorship, surveillance, and traffic manipulation were present in the tested networks.

Overall, the accessibility of 2052 sites were tested with 293,415 test times across 10 different ISPs, and the network measurement data collected between 1st January 2022 and 30th June 2022 was analysed. We found 1108 websites (54%) were inaccessible by three major networks including VNPT, FPT and Viettel.

The key findings of this study show that Vietnamese ISPs appear to be implementing censorship through DNS and http requests (DNS tampering and IP address blocking into black list) which serve block pages. It's worth noting that Vietnamese ISPs appear to be implementing censorship at their own discretion, since the types of sites blocked vary across ISPs as well as the length of time to block or allow access.

As part of this study, the highest blocked sites belong to following categories:

· Human rights

· Pornography

· Political criticism

· News Media (News sites are mainly foreign news sites)

The fact that these categories are not blocked on all networks leads us to believe that the Vietnamese ISPs might have been filtering content under broad government orders to block what is related to curtailing political opposition, unfavourable to the party, corruption, and human rights. On a positive note, WhatsApp, Facebook, Zalo, Line, Instagram, Tiktok and several social networks appeared to be accessible on all tested networks during the testing period.

However, in the process of data research, there are a few limitations such as the test list has not been updated in the software and some pages have changed their domain addresses or died. So, they cannot be accessed, but the software still identifies them as corrupted or blocking and censorship.

Acknowledgements