

Internet Monitoring Action Project

iMAP Philippines 2024 Internet Censorship Report

Khairil Zhafri (EngageMedia) and Siti Nurliza Samsudin (Sinar Project)

Published/Produced by **Sinar Project**
team@sinarproject.org
<https://sinarproject.org>

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About iMAP

The 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 10 countries: Myanmar, Cambodia, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam and Timor-Leste. Sinar Project works with national digital rights partners in these ten countries. The project is done via Open Observatory Network Interference (OONI) detection and reporting systems, and it involves the maintenance of test lists and the collection and analysis of measurements.

More information is 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 that uses 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 nation's public affairs by making the Malaysian Parliament and Government more open, transparent, and accountable. More information is available at <https://sinarproject.org>.

How to use this report

This report provides an overview of the state of internet censorship in the Philippines. It is not meant to provide a comparison of measurements across countries or measurements among different website categories covered by the iMAP project.

- Recommendations to audience:
- Learn about supporting evidence related to internet censorship in Philippines by reviewing research and case studies.
- Understand the latest developments of internet censorship in the country, in terms of methods of blockings and the websites affected by censorship.
- Support or advocate for changes in laws and policies to improve internet freedom in the Philippines.
- Take action and get involved by spreading awareness, signing petitions, or joining initiatives that fight against internet censorship.

Abbreviations

ALDR	Alcohol and Drugs
ANON	Anonymization and Circumvention tools
ASN	Autonomous System Number
COMT	Communication Tools
CTRL	Control Content
CULTR	Culture
DNS	Domain Name System
COMM	E-commerce
ECON	Economics
ENV	Environment
FILE	File-sharing
GMB	Gambling
GAME	Gaming
GOVT	Government
HACK	Hacking Tools
HATE	Hate Speech
HOST	Hosting and Blogging Platforms
HUMR	Human Rights Issues
HTTP	Hypertext Transfer Protocol
IGO	Intergovernmental Organisations
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
iMAP	Internet Monitoring Action Project
IP	Internet Protocol
ISP	Internet Service Provider
MMED	Media Sharing
MISC	Miscellaneous Content
NEWS	News Media
DATE	Online Dating
OONI	Open Observatory Network Interference

POLR	Political Criticism
PORN	Pornography
PROV	Provocative Attire
PUBH	Public Health
REL	Religion
SRCH	Search Engines
XED	Sex Education
GRP	Social Networking
MILX	Terrorism and Militants
TCP	Transmission Control Protocol
TLS	Transport Layer Security

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Key Findings

- From mid-2023 to mid-2024, the socio-political landscape in the Philippines was dominated by maritime disputes with China and division over a proposed constitutional amendment
- While there are unnoticeable changes in the state internet censorship in the country, some websites previously ordered to be blocked by the court, such as Bulatlat, have been found to be accessible now.

Background

Population	115.6 mil (2022) ¹
Internet penetration (% of population using the internet)	53% (2021) ²
Mobile subscriptions (per 100 inhabitants)	144 (2022) ³
Freedom on the Net score (2023)	61/100 (2023) ⁴
World Press Freedom Index ranking	134/180 (2024) ⁵
Religion (%)	78.8% Roman Catholic 6.4% Islam 2.6% Iglesia ni Cristo 0.8% Seventh Day Adventist 0.8% Aglipay 0.6% Iglesia Filipina Independiente 0.5% Bible Baptist Church 0.4% United Church of Christ in the Philippines 0.4% Jehovah’s Witness 0.4% Church of Christ (2022) ⁶
ICCPR Ratification	23 Oct 1986 ⁷

Table 1: Summary of demographics of the Philippines

¹ World Bank Group (n.d.). Population, total - Philippines.

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=PH>

² World Bank Group (n.d.). Individuals using the Internet (% of population) - Philippines.

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.ZS?locations=PH>

³ World Bank Group (n.d.). Mobile cellular subscriptions (per 100 people) - Philippines.

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.CEL.SETS.P2?locations=PH>

⁴ Freedom House (2023). Freedom on the Net 2023: Philippines.

<https://freedomhouse.org/country/philippines/freedom-net/2023>

⁵ Reporters without Borders (2024). World Press Freedom Index 2024. <https://rsf.org/en/index>

⁶ Mapa, D.S. (Feb 22, 2023) Religious Affiliation in the Philippines (2020 Census of Population and Housing). Philippine Statistics Authority.

<https://psa.gov.ph/content/religious-affiliation-philippines-2020-census-population-and-housing>

⁷ UN Office of Legal Affairs (n.d.) Status of Treaties: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. United Nations Treaty Collections.

https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-4&chapter=4&clang=_en

Political Landscape

From mid-2023 to mid-2024, the socio-political landscape in the Philippines was dominated by maritime disputes with China and division over a proposed constitutional amendment. In the background, the rift between Duterte and Marcos political dynasties and their allies in congress, as well as the threat of an overall unfavourable economic outlook, captured attention.

A year after taking office, President Bongbong Marcos – who had campaigned on being tougher against China – departed from his predecessor’s friendlier approach to Beijing’s encroachment in the South China Sea (or the West Philippine Sea in the Philippines).⁸ Following clashes with the China Coast Guard in Spratly Islands, the government summoned the Chinese ambassador on at least three separate occasions since August 2023⁹ with senior officials calling for expulsion.¹⁰ Amidst escalating tensions, the Philippines announced its plan to exit the Belt and Road Initiative in favour of competing infrastructure partnerships from China’s rivals.¹¹ President Marcos’ stronger stance towards China bolstered his standing internationally¹² and strengthened military co-operations with the United States and its allies.¹³

On the domestic front, the Duterte-Marcos feud translated into a standoff between the Senate and the House of Representatives over a proposed amendment to the 1987 Constitution (or charter change). At the start of 2024, a people’s initiative mooted a charter change, which was rejected by the Senate and subsequently suspended by the Commission on Elections over fraud allegations.¹⁴ President Marcos, who held significant influence over congress,¹⁵ indicated his support for an economic charter change, rather than political one,

⁸

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jun/30/a-year-of-marcos-jr-how-a-dictators-son-has-changed-the-philippines>

⁹

<https://apnews.com/article/philippines-south-china-sea-water-cannon-ambassador-c39a279d3267990320041c ff211fd6da>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/oct/23/china-philippines-ships-boats-collision-south-china-sea-vessels-spratly-islands>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/12/11/philippines-summons-china-ambassador-after-south-china-sea-confrontations>

¹⁰

<https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/southeast-asia/article/3262146/south-china-sea-philippines-seeks-expulsion-beijings-diplomats-disinformation-over-recorded-call>

¹¹ <https://www.dw.com/en/philippines-drops-chinas-belt-and-road-as-tensions-flare/a-67344929>

¹² <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-68594365>

¹³ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/apr/22/us-philippines-military-drills-balikatan>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/nov/25/australia-and-philippines-begin-joint-patrols-in-south-china-sea-as-regional-tensions-rise>

¹⁴ <https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/01/29/24/comelec-suspends-peoples-initiative-proceedings>

¹⁵

<https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/in-depth/marcos-jr-tightens-grip-congress-supermajority-blocs-senate-house-representatives/>

citing the potential of attracting foreign investments to the Philippines. At a rally opposing the charter change, former president Duterte openly criticised his successor, accusing Marcos and his family of a ploy to consolidate power whilst calling for the Philippine military and police to defend the constitution.

The spat between the two continued to play out in public until March 2024 when the House of Representatives passed an economic charter change that would lift the restrictions on foreign ownership in public utilities, education, and advertising businesses. The House of Representatives also commenced its inquiry into Duterte’s war on drugs in May 2024 though some people remained sceptical of its efficacy.¹⁶ The impasse over the charter change culminated into the resignation of the Senate president who “did not agree on the proposed timeline” of the constitutional amendment.¹⁷ Vice President Sara Duterte-Carpio – the former president’s daughter who had been mired in controversy over her use of public funds – stepped down from her position as education secretary, effectively withdrawing herself from Marcos’ cabinet. This deepened the rift between the two camps less than a year before the 2025 general elections.¹⁸ While the general public remained unconvinced of the charter change,¹⁹ a Duterte-aligned group launched a competing constitutional convention initiative in June 2024.²⁰

Despite the political drama, the government refused to cooperate with investigations carried out by the International Criminal Court (ICC) into the “war on drugs” during Duterte’s presidency.²¹ A joint research project by the University of the Philippines Diliman and Ghent University reported over 340 drug-related killings during Marcos’ first 12 months as president, a 40 percent increase from the previous period.²² Media practitioners also remained the targets of extrajudicial killings in the Philippines. In November 2023, 57-year-old radio broadcaster in Northern Mindanao was shot dead whilst live on air.²³ According to the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP), this is the fourth recorded murder of media practitioners during Marcos’ presidency and the 199th since the revolution that toppled his father in 1986.²⁴

¹⁶

<https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/in-depth/summary-house-drug-war-hearings-human-rights-committee-anything-substantial/>

¹⁷ <https://www.rappler.com/philippines/migz-zubiri-out-as-senate-president/>

¹⁸ <https://www.rappler.com/philippines/elections/status-races-alliances-proxy-wars-year-before-2025-polls/>

¹⁹ <https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/03/28/news/filipinos-dont-want-charter-change-poll/1938817>

²⁰ <https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/06/20/news/national/pro-con-con-group-launched-in-qc/1952194>

²¹

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/philippines-will-not-cooperate-with-icc-probe-into-drugs-war-president-2024-01-23/>

²² <https://drive.google.com/file/d/13H8QtAeSU5rs79zFg7pURlht3WwwRqQX/view>

²³ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/6/philippines-radio-journalist-shot-dead-on-air-in-brazen-killing>

²⁴

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/nov/05/philippines-radio-journalist-juan-jumalon-shot-dead-during-live-broadcast>

In February 2024, the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression, Irene Khan called on the government to institute measures to stop the practice of “red-tagging”.²⁵ In her country visit preliminary report, Khan named the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) as responsible for instigating and enabling the practice of branding human rights defenders as supporters or members of the Communist Party. This vilification of human rights defenders is often a prelude to threats, surveillance, attacks, and even killing. She instead recommended a presidential executive order denouncing red-tagging and the abolition of NTF-ELCAC to allow a renewal in the “whole of nation” peace-building programme.²⁶ In the same preliminary report, Khan lauded the release of politician Leila de Lima²⁷ and the acquittal of journalist Maria Ressa²⁸ as positive signals whilst raising free speech concerns at universities.²⁹

In a May 2024 ruling on a red-tagging case, the Philippine Supreme Court denounced the practice and granted a protection order against military officials.³⁰ In the Philippines, a writ of amparo can be filed by individuals to petition the court to grant a protection order against government officials red-tagging them.³¹ Activists noted that this unequivocal denunciation of red-tagging as a threat to the right to life, liberty, and security as an encouraging development within the apex court in conformity with the normative human rights standards³². Still pending in the Supreme Court’s docket is the appeal on cyber libel case involving Ressa and Reynaldo Santos. In 2020, Ressa and Santos were convicted under the Cybercrime Prevention Act in connection with a 2012 article in Rappler. In March 2024, the Supreme Court granted leave for Khan and the International Bar Association to appear as amicus curiae in the case³³. Reporters Without Borders (RSF), along with the Committee to

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<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/02/philippines-un-expert-calls-more-sustained-reforms-prevent-threats-and>

26

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/expression/statements/20240202-eom-philippines-r-freedex.pdf>

27

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/6/24/philippine-court-clears-duterte-critic-leila-de-lima-of-drugs-charges>

28

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/9/12/nobel-laureate-maria-ressa-acquitted-in-philippines-tax-evasion-case>

²⁹ <https://www.rappler.com/voices/newsletters/university-santo-tomas-photo-takedown-press-freedom/>

³⁰ <https://sc.judiciary.gov.ph/sc-red-tagging-threatens-right-to-life-liberty-and-security/>

³¹ <https://opinion.inquirer.net/173652/an-amparo-success-though-not-yet-complete>

³² <https://forum-asia.org/itv-redtagging/>

33

<https://qa.philstar.com/headlines/2024/03/25/2343234/sc-allows-un-expert-act-friend-court-maria-ressas-cyber-libel-plea>

Protect Journalists (CPJ), and the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ) also filed an amicus brief in this high-profile case supporting Ressa and Santos³⁴.

The Philippine economy emerged out of the COVID-19 crisis with encouraging growth.³⁵ Despite this, many people have been adversely impacted by the food and fuel price inflation³⁶ with the increase in rice prices soaring as high as 22 percent at the start of 2024.³⁷ This compounded the impact of sugar and onion supply crises a year earlier.³⁸ Unlike neighbouring countries, the Philippines is especially vulnerable to high inflation in part due to its relatively higher production and distribution costs following recent privatisation of public utilities.³⁹ Privatisation of state-owned assets has been a mainstay of Marcos policy to fund Maharlika, the Philippine sovereign wealth fund established in July 2023 to modernise the country's economy.⁴⁰ Some experts have raised concerns over the lack of substantive safeguards for transparency and accountability in the implementing rules and regulations for the fund and many in the business sector questioned the need for its establishment.⁴¹ The government's plan to modernise industries in the Philippines also faced a major setback as transport operators staged nationwide strikes.⁴²

The impact of socio-economic hardship in the Philippines had been further exacerbated by natural disasters and climate change. Typhoon Doksuri (or Super Typhoon Egay in the Philippines) recorded a death toll of 25 in July 2023.⁴³ In December 2023, a devastating earthquake hit eastern Mindanao killing at least three people,⁴⁴ two weeks after another earthquake in the southern part of the island that killed 11 people.⁴⁵ The region also suffered deadly floods and landslides during early 2024 monsoon season, which killed at least more than 100 people.⁴⁶ These natural disasters contributed to a growing internal displacement crisis in the Philippines. In 2024, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC)

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<https://rsf.org/en/philippines-rsf-and-two-other-leading-press-freedom-organisations-submit-amicus-brief-mari-a-ressa>

³⁵ <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1217969>

³⁶ <https://www.reuters.com/markets/asia/philippine-annual-inflation-38-april-2024-05-07/>

³⁷ <https://asia.nikkei.com/Economy/Inflation/Philippine-rice-inflation-hits-highest-level-since-2009>

³⁸ <https://www.asiasentinel.com/p/bongbong-marcos-onions-agriculture-crisis>

³⁹ <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2023/4/3/asias-living-costs-are-rising-in-philippines-theyre-soaring>

⁴⁰ <https://asia.nikkei.com/Economy/Philippines-weighs-casino-power-plant-sale-to-seed-wealth-fund>

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<https://www.rappler.com/voices/imho/analysis-consequences-recent-changes-maharlika-implementing-rules-regulations/>

⁴² <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/3/8/jeepney-strike-drives-home-concerns-about-modernisation-plan>

⁴³ <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2023/07/31/2285188/egay-death-toll-rises-25-300000-people-displaced>

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<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20231204-magnitude-6-9-quake-latest-to-rattle-southern-philippines>

⁴⁵ <https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/11/21/23/mindanao-quake-death-toll-rises-to-11>

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<https://www.reuters.com/business/environment/floods-landslides-kill-least-20-people-southern-philippines-2024-02-05/>

reported around 2.6 million disaster-related displacements in the country in 2023.⁴⁷ Based on findings from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Swiss Re Institute estimated a climate-related economic loss of three percent of gross domestic product, the highest of 36 countries surveyed.⁴⁸ Extreme weather conditions has not only negatively impacted on the country's economy with rising energy costs⁴⁹ but has also set back Filipino children's education as schools were shut during heatwaves.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ <https://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/philippines>

⁴⁸

<https://www.swissre.com/press-release/Economic-losses-set-to-increase-due-to-climate-change-with-US-and-Philippines-the-hardest-hit-Swiss-Re-Institute-finds/3051a9b0-e379-4bcb-990f-3cc8236d55a1>

⁴⁹

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2024-05-01/philippines-keeps-schools-shut-as-heat-shows-no-signs-of-abating>

⁵⁰

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/06/24/2365264/cost-climate-disruptions-philippines-loses-32-teaching-days-extreme-weather>

Legal Environment

1987 Constitution

Article III of the 1987 Constitution of the Philippines guarantees a set of fundamental liberties, including the rights to privacy of communication and correspondence (section 3); to freedom of speech, of expression, or of the press (section 4); to information (section 7); and others.

Libel Under the Revised Penal Code and the Cybercrime Prevention Act 2012

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. Libel laws are frequently 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 PHP.

The Cybercrime Prevention Act, passed in 2012, does not specify a prescription period for cyber libel. 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.⁵¹ However, in October 2024, the Supreme Court ruled that the prescription period in a cyber libel shall conform to the RPC.⁵² In a separate case, the Supreme Court had also ruled that cyber libel conviction may carry a fine as an alternative to imprisonment.⁵³ In July 2023, the Supreme Court had distinguished cyber libel – i.e. libel “committed through a computer system” – under the Act from other forms of libel provided in article 355 of the Revised Penal Code.⁵⁴ The case of Maria Ressa and Reynaldo Santos Jr from the Rappler news website has become one of the most notable cyber libel cases in recent years.⁵⁵

⁵¹ 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/>

⁵² <https://sc.judiciary.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/258524.pdf>

⁵³

<https://sc.judiciary.gov.ph/sc-for-online-libel-courts-may-impose-alternative-penalty-of-fine-instead-of-imprisonment/>

⁵⁴

<https://www.rappler.com/philippines/supreme-court-decision-libelous-facebook-post-punishable-cybercrime-law-not-libel/>

⁵⁵ 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-charge-s-in-philippines>

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.⁵⁶ It also sets out penalties for violating the 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.

Anti-Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children (OSAEC) 2022

The 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 providers, and financial intermediaries to prevent child pornography.⁵⁷ This is in addition to the Anti-Child Pornography Act 2009, which defines the offence, sets out the punishments for it, and provides for the powers of the internet regulator in handling child pornography.⁵⁸

SIM Registration Act 2022

In September 2022, the Philippine Congress passed the SIM registration bill mandating the identity registration of all mobile subscribers with the aim of curbing "illegal and malicious use" of the mobile network.⁵⁹ Newly-elected President Marcos Jr. signed the SIM Registration Act into law in October 2022, and the law came into effect with the promulgation of its implementing rules and regulations in December 2022.

Under this new law, mobile operators may only sell deactivated prepaid SIM cards. To activate a SIM card, end-users must register by submitting their government-issued photo identification with a selfie. Existing prepaid subscribers were given until the end of July 2023 to register their SIM card or risk termination of their subscription. The law imposes a range of penalties, including fines and imprisonment for failure to register SIM cards, breach of user confidentiality, and registration using false information. The previous version of the law vetoed by former President Duterte included provisions requiring the registration of

⁵⁶ Data Privacy Act, (2012). <https://www.privacy.gov.ph/data-privacy-act/>

⁵⁷ 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>

⁵⁸ Anti-Child Pornography Act, (2009). https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2009/ra_9775_2009.html

⁵⁹ <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/downloads/2022/10oct/20221010-RA-11934-FRM.pdf>

social media accounts. Citing risks of privacy intrusion and personal data breach, civil society groups in the Philippines have strongly opposed the SIM registration law.

Campus Journalism Act 1991

Section 7 of the Campus Journalism Act provides a security of tenure to student journalists from being “expelled or suspended solely on the basis of articles he or she has written, or on the basis of the performance of his or her duties in the student publication.” However, in a 2000 ruling, the Supreme Court made an exception where “such article[s] materially disrupt class work or involve substantial disorder or invasion of the rights of others”.⁶⁰ Recent cases of on-campus censorship have revived calls for strengthening protections for student media.⁶¹

Reported Cases of Internet Censorship

While there were no cases of direct internet censorship during the reporting period, two incidents of cyber attacks targeting media websites were reported. In late October 2023, Rappler became a target of distributed denial of service attacks (DDoS).⁶² A few weeks later, the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ) had to take down its website in response to a major attack by an unidentified hacker.⁶³ In the past, PCIJ had been a target of DDoS attacks in connection with its reporting on Duterte’s war on drugs.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ https://lawphil.net/judjuris/juri2000/dec2000/gr_127930_2000.html

⁶¹

<https://www.rappler.com/moveph/students-call-revisit-campus-journalism-strengthen-alliance-vs-censorship/>

⁶²

<https://www.rappler.com/technology/ddos-attack-rappler-october-2023-proxy-providers-rayobyte-fineproxy-weaponized-qurium/>

⁶³

<https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/category/press-releases/article/philippines-pcij-website-targeted-by-cyber-attack>

⁶⁴ <https://www.rappler.com/philippines/141312-pcij-website-attacked-stories-duterte-war-drugs/>

Network Landscape and Internet Penetration

Most ISPs in the Philippines are publicly-listed corporations. Japanese government-linked NTT owns a combined 21 percent stake in PLDT, whilst Singapore state-owned telco Singtel has 22 percent ownership of Globe on top of its joint stake with Philippine conglomerate Ayala via Asiacom. China's state-owned telco, China Telecom, owns 40 percent of DITO, the third major telecommunications service provider after PLDT and Globe. Following the rollout of SIM registration, Smart (a subsidiary of PLDT) has the highest number of mobile subscribers at 50 million, followed by Globe at 48.4 million and DITO at 7.5 million.

In 2022, the government lifted the 40 percent foreign ownership restriction, thus allowing foreign investors to acquire controlling stakes in Philippine telecommunications companies.⁶⁵ The government has also eased right-of-way rules to allow mobile operators to expand 5G infrastructure in the Philippines.

According to OpenSignal, internet speed in the Philippines has improved in 2023 but still lags behind neighbouring countries.⁶⁶ With the expansion of the 5G network and availability of affordable customer-premises equipment, fixed wireless access has become a cost-efficient alternative to DSL and fibre-based access to provide internet connectivity across the Philippine archipelago. DITO introduced a fixed wireless 5G service in 2023 whilst Globe has a similar service since 2019. Satellite internet access has also gained traction to bridge the urban-rural digital divide in the Philippines, most notably with the entrance of Starlink in February 2023.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Venzon, C. (Mar 22, 2022). 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>

⁶⁶ Fenwick, S. (Sep 21, 2023). The mobile experience in the Philippines has improved under Marcos but still lags behind many of its regional peers. OpenSignal. <https://www.opensignal.com/2023/09/21/the-mobile-experience-in-the-philippines-has-improved-under-marcos-but-still-lags-behind-many-of-its>

⁶⁷ Department of Information and Communications Technology (February 24, 2023). DICT welcomes Starlink to PH. <https://dict.gov.ph/dict-welcomes-starlink-to-ph/>

Findings on Internet Censorship in the Philippines

All of the findings are based on data collected through OONI from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024.

Blocking of Websites

Throughout the one-year period, approximately 3.3 million measurements from 2,524 domains were tested on the OONI Probe. For the purpose of this study, these measurements are grouped into the following categories:

- **Measured or Measurement Counts** refers to the total number of measurements collected through the OONI Probe.
- **Blocked** refers to “Confirmed Blocked” in OONI measurements, which are measurements from websites that are automatically confirmed to be blocked (e.g., a block page was served).
- **Likely Blocked** refers to “Anomaly” and “Failure” in OONI measurements. Anomalies are measurements that show signs of potential blocking; however, false positives can occur. Failures refer to failed experiments in OONI testing, although they can sometimes be symptomatic of censorship.

	Jul-Sep 2023	Oct-Dec 2023	Jan-Mar 2024	Apr-Jun 2024	Total
Measured	502,459	461,911	647,038	671,826	2,283,234
Blocked	511	271	183	237	1,202
Block rate	0.10%	0.06%	0.03%	0.04%	0.05%
Domains	1,935	1,965	2,000	1,933	2,052
ASNs	19	22	23	19	40

Table 2: Summary of OONI web connectivity measurements for the Philippines from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024.

These measurements were analysed using the heuristics stated in Annexe IV. It was found that there were 55 websites (or 57 domains) confirmed to be blocked, of which 12 websites (13 domains) were confirmed by OONI Probe and 21 were confirmed by heuristics. The full list of these confirmed blocked websites is included in Annexe I.

Category	Category description	Measured	Blocked & Likely Blocked	
ALDR	Alcohol & Drugs	16,945	198	1.17%
ANON	Anonymization and circumvention tools	230,596	3,262	1.41%
COMM	E-commerce	13,981	185	1.32%
COMT	Communication Tools	159,938	6,087	3.81%
CTRL	Control content	19,489	132	0.68%
CULTR	Culture	61,619	742	1.20%
DATE	Online Dating	21,831	1,182	5.41%
ECON	Economics	16,349	84	0.51%
ENV	Environment	47,962	460	0.96%
FILE	File-sharing	49,422	3,719	7.52%
GAME	Gaming	12,979	56	0.43%
GMB	Gambling	17,981	2,015	11.21%
GOVT	Government	21,053	878	4.17%
GRP	Social Networking	325,626	3,577	1.10%
HACK	Hacking Tools	22,973	793	3.45%
HATE	Hate Speech	3,560	28	0.79%
HOST	Hosting and Blogging Platforms	121,404	3,687	3.04%
HUMR	Human Rights Issues	264,408	4,890	1.85%
IGO	Intergovernmental Organisations	8,404	81	0.96%
LGBT	LGBTQ+	145,112	1,793	1.24%
MILX	Terrorism and Militants	8,310	2,686	32.32%
MISC	Miscellaneous content	1,825	18	0.99%
MMED	Media sharing	101,485	979	0.96%
NEWS	News Media	304,182	7,992	2.63%
POLR	Political Criticism	84,506	6,206	7.34%
PORN	Pornography	19,689	2,457	12.48%
PROV	Provocative Attire	7,309	289	3.95%
PUBH	Public Health	43,436	620	1.43%
REL	Religion	58,962	2,549	4.32%

Category	Category description	Measured	Blocked & Likely Blocked	
SRCH	Search Engines	42,256	2,158	5.11%
XED	Sex Education	28,929	1,047	3.62%

Table 2: Summary of OONI web connectivity measurements for the Philippines from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024 by category.

Note: Blocked and likely blocked measurements include Confirmed Blocked, Anomaly, and Failures on OONI measurements.

The sections below discuss the blocking of websites based on certain categories and events relevant to the Philippines.

News Media

OONI Probe measurements did not identify the blocking of any news websites in the Philippines. However, further analysis of the measurements found that 2 news websites were likely blocked by 5 ISPs during the reporting period.

Domain	Blocking ISPs		Confirmed by
banthis.tv	AS45754, AS135582	AS56207, Heuristics	OONI Explorer
www.kcna.kp	AS4775, AS135582	AS132199, Heuristics	OONI Explorer

The website banthis.tv hosts videos that have been removed or banned elsewhere, and www.kcna.kp is the website for the state news agency of North Korea.

Human Rights

OONI Probe measurements did not identify the blocking of any websites related to human rights in the Philippines. However, 2 websites were likely blocked by 8 ISPs based on further analysis of the measurement data.

Domain	Blocking ISPs		Confirmed by
humanrightsinasean.info	AS9299, AS17639, AS56099, AS132199	AS14593, Heuristics AS23944, AS132021,	OONI Explorer

Domain	Blocking ISPs	Confirmed by
www.religioustolerance.org	AS14593, AS38553	Heuristics OONI Explorer

The online platform humanrightsinasean.info is run by FORUM-ASIA and provides advocacy materials and information for human rights in ASEAN. In addition, www.religioustolerance.org was the website of Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance (OCRT), a group that promotes religious freedom.

Terrorism and Militants

OONI Probe measurements did not identify the blocking of any websites related to terrorism and militants in the Philippines. However, 2 websites were likely blocked by 9 ISPs based on further analysis of the measurement data.

Domain	Blocking ISPs	Confirmed by
rctundfp.wordpress.com	AS17639, AS56207	Heuristics OONI Explorer
home.casema.nl	AS9299, AS14593, AS17639, AS23944, AS56099, AS56207, AS132199	Heuristics OONI Explorer

The first domain, rctundfp.wordpress.com, is a blog for the Revolutionary Council of Trade Unions, a revolutionary syndicalist movement linked to the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP). The second domain, home.casema.nl, was likely blocked because NDFP hosted its content at <http://home.casema.nl/ndf/>. NDFP has been designated as a terrorist organisation since June 2021,⁶⁸ and NDFP-linked websites were amongst those identified in the June 2022 National Security Council (NSC) memo.⁶⁹

Porn

Seven pornographic websites (8 domains) were confirmed to be blocked based on OONI Probe measurements. Additionally, one website in the same category was likely to be blocked based on further analysis of the measurement data. Four different ISPs were identified in these blockings.

⁶⁸ <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1223292>

⁶⁹ <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1177276>

Domain	Blocking ISPs	Confirmed by	
deviantclip.com	AS9299	OONI Probe	OONI Explorer
jizzhut.com	AS10139, AS9299	OONI Probe	OONI Explorer
motherless.com	AS9299,	OONI Probe	OONI Explorer
porn.com	AS9299	OONI Probe	OONI Explorer
xhamster.com	AS9299	OONI Probe	OONI Explorer
www.xnxx.com	AS9299	OONI Probe	OONI Explorer
xnxx.com	AS9299	OONI Probe	OONI Explorer
www.youporn.com	AS9299	OONI Probe	OONI Explorer
efuckt.com	AS14593, AS56099	Heuristics	OONI Explorer

Gambling

Five gambling websites were confirmed to be blocked based on OONI Probe measurements. Additionally, one website in the same category was likely to be blocked based on further analysis of the measurement data. Seven different ISPs were identified in these blockings.

Domain	Blocking ISPs	Confirmed by	
www.888casino.com	AS9299	OONI Probe	OONI Explorer
www.eurogrand.com	AS10139, AS14593, AS17639, AS56099, AS132199	Heuristics	OONI Explorer
www.goldenpalace.com	AS9299	OONI Probe	OONI Explorer
www.partypoker.com	AS10139, AS9299	OONI Probe	OONI Explorer
www.pokerstars.com	AS9299	OONI Probe	OONI Explorer
www.trendsmap.com	AS139831, AS10139, AS9299	OONI Probe	OONI Explorer

Method of Blocking

All websites blocked or likely blocked in the Philippines were found to be blocked through DNS tampering.

Acknowledgement of Limitations

- **Period of study**

To examine the most recent censorship trends and events, we limited the findings of this study to OONI network measurements collected from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024.

- **Vantage points**

Although OONI network measurements were collected from several vantage points in the country, the [OOONI Probe](#) tests were not run consistently on each network, nor on all networks in the country.

- **Use of domain as a unit of measurement of websites**

In general, “URL” (or in OONI’s terms – input) and “domain” are interchangeable terms used to refer to a website. In the OONI test list, the full URLs are input in the probe to be tested for censorship, similar to a URL starting with “https” or “http” in a browser. The URLs are measured for censorship by [OOONI Probe](#) with the [Web Connectivity experiment](#), which is designed to measure whether access to tested URLs is interfered with through DNS tampering, TCP/IP blocking, an HTTP transparent proxy, or through TLS interference. However, when analyzing results on OONI, the reader should be aware that there are differences in the numbers concerning the specific input or domain, as a different volume of measurements may have been collected for a URL (e.g. <https://www.hrw.org/asia/cambodia>) in comparison to a domain (e.g. www.hrw.org).

In the 2023 [report](#), we based our analysis primarily on URLs because they were thought to provide more context on the reason why the web page was blocked and could be categorized more similarly to the [Citizen Lab test lists](#), which are URL format. However, in this 2024 report, we based our analysis on domains, so readers will need to be cautious about making year-to-year comparisons.

- **Confirmed blockings vs. Likely blockings or Inaccessible**

The confirmed blocked websites are based on the data where the testing result shows a trace to a government or ISP block page. This typically means a block page is served when the user tries to access the website on a particular network or that DNS resolution returns an IP address associated with censorship. These cases are automatically annotated as “confirmed blocked” based on [fingerprints](#) added to OONI’s database. When a website is found to be confirmed blocked, it may be blocked only on specific networks and remain accessible on the rest. Confirmed blockings may also be specific based on the URL; for example, <https://abc.com/> may be censored but not <https://www.abc.com/>.

In this 2024 report, confirmed blockings and likely blockings were consolidated based on the country. See the section on [verifying OONI measurements](#).

- **Test lists**

The websites tested for censorship on OONI are either from the [Citizen Lab test lists](#) or additional websites tested by [OONI Probe](#) users. While the websites in the test lists are categorized based on specific [standardized categories](#), the percentage of blocked or likely blocked cases may not necessarily reflect the entire state of internet censorship in the country, as only sampled websites are included in the testing.

- **Differences in numbers with OONI data**

The findings in this report were obtained after further processing the data from OONI. This involved obtaining more confirmed blockings and eliminating false positives through additional heuristics and manual verification by iMAP researchers based on country or local context. While these heuristics will eventually be added to OONI's fingerprints, OONI will only process them for future testing.

Additionally, iMAP researchers have categorized blocked websites that were not part of the Citizen Lab test lists but were tested on OONI via custom test lists. Hence, the figures in this report may differ from the results on [OONI Explorer](#).

- **Testing of instant messaging apps and circumvention tools**

The instant messaging apps and circumvention tools are limited to those [tested on OONI](#). Therefore, the results may not reflect the state of censorship of apps more commonly used in individual countries.

Conclusion

While there had been little changes to the state of internet censorship in the country, continuous monitoring of network interference may still be necessary given the sociopolitical landscape.

Contribute to the Study

If you would like to contribute to the OONI measurements, there are several ways to get involved:

- Perform testing 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 on GitHub or on [OONI](#).
- Translate the OONI Probe to your local language [here](#).
- Participate in community discussions on the [OONI Slack channel](#) or our Volunteers Telegram Channel.

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Additionally, we would like to extend our gratitude to local partners, activists, academicians, researchers, and anonymous users in the Philippines for their assistance in running the OONI Probe.

	Website	Domain	Category	Blocking ASN	
1	888casino.com	www.888casino.com	GMB	AS9299	OONI Explorer
2	amihanwomen.org	amihanwomen.org	HUMR		OONI Explorer
3	angpamalakaya.org	angpamalakaya.org	POLR		OONI Explorer
4	arkibongbayan.org	www.arkibongbayan.org	POLR		OONI Explorer
5	banthis.tv	banthis.tv	NEWS	AS45754, AS56207, AS135582	OONI Explorer
6	blog-by-tag-a-ilog-news.blogspot.com	blog-by-tag-a-ilog-news.blogspot.com	NEWS		OONI Explorer
7	bulatlat.com	bulatlat.com	NEWS		OONI Explorer
		www.bulatlat.com	NEWS		OONI Explorer
8	compatriotsndf.wordpress.com	compatriotsndf.wordpress.com	MILX		OONI Explorer
9	counterpunch.org	www.counterpunch.org	NEWS		OONI Explorer
10	cpp.ph	cpp.ph	MILX\$		OONI Explorer
11	deviantclip.com	deviantclip.com	PORN	AS9299	OONI Explorer
12	doh.centraleu.pi-dns.com	doh.centraleu.pi-dns.com	HOST	AS10139, AS17639, AS23944, AS56099, AS132199, AS135582	OONI Explorer
13	efuckt.com	efuckt.com	PORN\$	AS14593, AS56099	OONI Explorer
14	eurogrand.com	www.eurogrand.com	GMB	AS10139, AS14593, AS17639, AS56099, AS132199	OONI Explorer
15	getrevue.co	www.getrevue.co	HOST	AS10139, AS14593, AS17639, AS56099, AS132199, AS135582	OONI Explorer
16	goldenpalace.com	www.goldenpalace.com	GMB	AS9299	OONI Explorer
17	hiyaw.net	hiyaw.net	POLR\$		OONI Explorer
18	home.casema.nl	home.casema.nl	MILX	AS9299, AS14593, AS17639, AS23944, AS56099, AS56207, AS132199	OONI Explorer

Website	Domain	Category	Blocking ASN	
19 humanrightsinasean.info	humanrightsinasean.info	HUMR\$	AS9299, AS14593, AS17639, AS23944, AS56099, AS132021, AS132199	OONI Explorer
20 ilps.info	ilps.info	POLR\$		OONI Explorer
21 im0-tub-com.yandex.net	im0-tub-com.yandex.net	SRCH	AS4775, AS9299, AS10139, AS14593, AS17639, AS23944, AS38553, AS56099, AS132199, AS135582	OONI Explorer
22 itsyoursexlife.com	www.itsyoursexlife.com	XED	AS9299, AS14593, AS17639, AS23944, AS56099, AS132199	OONI Explorer
23 jizzhut.com	jizzhut.com	PORN	AS10139, AS9299	OONI Explorer
24 josemariasison.org	josemariasison.org	MILX\$		OONI Explorer
25 kcna.kp	www.kcna.kp	NEWS	AS4775, AS132199, AS135582	OONI Explorer
26 liberation.ndfp.org	liberation.ndfp.org	MILX\$		OONI Explorer
27 libgen.fun	libgen.fun	FILE	AS56207, AS135582	OONI Explorer
28 libgen.life	libgen.life	FILE	AS56207, AS135582	OONI Explorer
29 metacafe.com	www.metacafe.com	MMED\$	AS10139, AS14593, AS132199	OONI Explorer
30 motherless.com	motherless.com	PORN	AS9299	OONI Explorer
31 mywebcalls.com	www.mywebcalls.com	COMT	AS9299, AS14593, AS17639, AS38553, AS56099, AS132199, AS135582	OONI Explorer
32 ndfp.org	ndfp.org	MILX\$		OONI Explorer
33 oic-oci.org	www.oic-oci.org	REL	AS9299, AS14593, AS17639, AS23944, AS56099, AS56207, AS132199	OONI Explorer
34 pamalakayaweb.wordpress.com	pamalakayaweb.wordpress.com	POLR		OONI Explorer
35 partisan-news.blogspot.com	partisan-news.blogspot.com	POLR		OONI Explorer

	Website	Domain	Category	Blocking ASN	
36	partypoker.com	www.partypoker.com	GMB	AS10139, AS9299	OONI Explorer
37	peopleresist.net	peopleresist.net	POLR		OONI Explorer
38	phenoelit.org	www.phenoelit.org	HACK	AS14593, AS132199	OONI Explorer
39	pinoyweekly.org	pinoyweekly.org	NEWS		OONI Explorer
40	pof.com	www.pof.com	DATE	AS9299, AS14593, AS17639, AS23944, AS56099, AS132199, AS135582	OONI Explorer
41	pokerstars.com	www.pokerstars.com	GMB	AS9299	OONI Explorer
42	porn.com	porn.com	PORN	AS9299	OONI Explorer
43	prwcinfo.wordpress.com	prwcinfo.wordpress.com	MILX		OONI Explorer
44	rctundfp.wordpress.com	rctundfp.wordpress.com	MILX	AS17639, AS56207	OONI Explorer
45	religioustolerance.org	www.religioustolerance.org	HUMR\$	AS14593, AS38553	OONI Explorer
46	rmp-national.weebly.com	rmp-national.weebly.com	HUMR		OONI Explorer
47	ruralmissionaries.wordpress.com	ruralmissionaries.wordpress.com	REL		OONI Explorer
48	saveourschoolsnetwork.wordpress.com	saveourschoolsnetwork.wordpress.com	HUMR		OONI Explorer
49	securityfocus.com	www.securityfocus.com	NEWS\$	AS14593, AS17639, AS56099	OONI Explorer
50	telegra.ph	telegra.ph	HOST	AS17639, AS56207	OONI Explorer
51	trendsmap.com	www.trendsmap.com	GRP	AS139831, AS10139, AS9299	OONI Explorer
52	umapilipinas.wordpress.com	umapilipinas.wordpress.com	POLR		OONI Explorer
53	xhamster.com	xhamster.com	PORN	AS9299	OONI Explorer
54	 xnxx.com	 www xnxx.com	PORN	AS9299	OONI Explorer
		 xnxx.com	PORN\$	AS9299	OONI Explorer
55	youporn.com	www.youporn.com	PORN	AS9299	OONI Explorer

Annex II: List of ISPs

	ASN	AS Name	Ownership / Description	Registration Country	Measurement Count
1	AS4775	GLOBE-TELECO M-AS	Globe Telecoms	PH	20,317
2	AS9009	M247	M247 Europe SRL	RO	875
3	AS9299	IPG-AS-AP	Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company	PH	411,052
4	AS9658	ETPI-IDS-AS-A P	Eastern Telecoms Phils., Inc.	PH	2,574
5	AS9821	DOST-PH-AP	Department of Science and Technology	PH	18
6	AS9927	PHILCOMNET-P H	Philippine Global Communications Corporation	PH	400
7	AS10139	SMARTBRO-PH -AP	Smart Broadband, Inc.	PH	16,909
8	AS14593	SPACEX-STARLINK	Space Exploration Technologies Corporation	US	377,121
9	AS17639	CONVERGE-AS	Converge ICT Solutions Inc.	PH	388,237
10	AS18018	GAMEBUILDER S-AS-PH	Gamebuilders Inc.	PH	600
11	AS18187	SOURCETELEC OMS-AS-AP	Source Telecoms Inc.	PH	2
12	AS18188	ATENEO-AS-AP	Ateneo de Manila University	PH	100
13	AS18233	PTTNET	Philippine Telegraph and Telephone Corporation	PH	29
14	AS21859	ZEN-ECN	Zenlayer Inc	US	48
15	AS22363	PHMGMT-AS1	Powerhouse Management, Inc.	US	100
16	AS23944	SKYBB-AS-AP	SKYBroadband SKYCable Corporation	PH	38,034
17	AS36384	GOOGLE-IT	Google LLC	US	756
18	AS38553	DCNETWORK-A S-AP	Dataconnect Network Services Inc.	PH	12,901
19	AS45754	CLEARPATH-AS -AP	Clear Path Networks Inc	PH	7,990

	ASN	AS Name	Ownership / Description	Registration Country	Measurement Count
20	AS55821	RADIUSTELEC OMS-AS-AP	RADIUS TELECOMS, INC.	PH	2,238
21	AS56099	AVCHI-CLICK- AS-AP	Asian Vision Cable	PH	843,013
22	AS56207	COMCLARK-PH	ComClark Network & Technology Corp	PH	8,232
23	AS63848	DLS-CSB-PH	De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde	PH	112
24	AS132021	KALIBOCABLE- PH	Kalibo Cable Television Network Inc	PH	2,686
25	AS132199	GLOBE-MOBILE -5TH-GEN-AS	Globe Telecom Inc.	PH	109,513
26	AS133334	DCNBSI-AS-AP	DCTV Cable Network Broadband Services Inc	PH	329
27	AS134497	CINE-AS-AP	Cine Cebu	PH	500
28	AS134707	RCC-AS-AP	RoyalCable Flash	PH	32
29	AS134788	PARASATCABL ETV-AS-AP	Parasat Cable TV, Inc	PH	3
30	AS135345	NEWMOUNTAI NVIEW-PH	NewMountainView Corporation	PH	37
31	AS135582	GCC-AS-AP	Galaxy Cable Corp.	PH	30,839
32	AS135594	KCTSI-AS-AP	Kabayan Cable Tv Systems Inc.	PH	1
33	AS136515	DCSI-AS-AP	Dasca Cable Services, Inc.	PH	4,008
34	AS137184	SUNIWAYTELE COM-AS-AP	Suniway Group of Companies Inc.	PH	1
35	AS137226	ACCTN-AS-AP	ANGELES CITY TELEVISION NETWORK, INC.	PH	20
36	AS138543	CABLEVISION- AS-AP	Cablevision Corporation	PH	8
37	AS138965	SSTI-AS-AP	Streamtech Technologies Inc.	PH	33
38	AS139831	DTC-AS-AP	DITO TELECOMMUNITY CORP.	PH	4,371
39	AS209854	CYBERZONEHU B	Cyberzone S.A.	PA	1
40	AS212238	CDNEXT	Datacamp Limited	GB	1,903

Annex III: Glossary

DNS	<p>DNS, which stands for Domain Name System, maps domain names to IP addresses.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
HTTP	<p>The Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP) is the underlying protocol used by the World Wide Web to transfer or exchange data across the internet.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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).</p> <p>The transmission of data over the HTTP protocol is unencrypted.</p>
Heuristics	<p>Heuristics obtain further confirmed blockings other than that which are detected based on OONI blocking fingerprints. More detailed explanation can be found here.</p>
ISP	<p>An Internet Service Provider (ISP) is an organization that provides services for accessing and using the internet.</p> <p>ISPs can be state-owned, commercial, community-owned, non-profit, or otherwise privately owned. Vodafone, AT&T, Airtel, and MTN are examples of ISPs.</p>
Middle boxes	<p>A middlebox is a computer networking device that transforms, inspects, filters, or otherwise manipulates traffic for purposes other than packet forwarding.</p>

	<p>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.</p> <p>Sometimes, middleboxes are also used to implement internet censorship and/or surveillance.</p> <p>The OONI Probe app includes two tests designed to measure networks with the aim of identifying the presence of middleboxes.</p>
TCP	<p>The Transmission Control Protocol (TCP) is one of the main protocols on the internet.</p> <p>To connect to a website, your computer needs to establish a TCP connection to the address of that website.</p> <p>TCP works on top of the Internet Protocol (IP), which defines how to address computers on the internet.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
TLS	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>

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

Annex IV: 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 second iMAP report covers measurements obtained in the one-year period from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023. The countries covered in this round are Cambodia, Hong Kong (China), Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, India, Vietnam and Timor-Leste.

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.

No.	Category Description	Code	Description
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.
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.

No.	Category Description	Code	Description
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.
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>.

Verifying OONI measurements

Confirmed blocked OONI measurements were based on fingerprints recorded here <https://github.com/ooni/blocking-fingerprints>. These fingerprints are based on either DNS or HTTP blocking. Fingerprints recorded as confirmed blockings are either those implemented nationally or by ISPs.

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?				
	Government entity	Local ISP ⁷⁰	CDN ⁷¹ / Private IP		
	↓	↓	↓		
	Confirmed blocking	Likely Blocked or Inaccessible	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 analyzed on OONI Explorer.

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

⁷⁰ In the case of India, there was [evidence](#) of popular websites hosting their site on the ISPs network for quicker loading times as the ISPs sometimes offer such edge networking services, hence websites redirected to local websites not marked as blocked.

⁷¹ In general, websites redirected to popular CDN such as CloudFlare, Amazon, Google, etc. are marked as not blocked.

Secondly, HTTP titles and bodies were analyzed 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 are obtained.

In the [2022 report](#), only confirmed blockings based on OONI or new fingerprints were reported.

For this round of reporting in 2023, we had also further identified confirmed blockings by verifying blockings shown in news reports with OONI measurements. This is because there were blockings that could be not identified using the DNS or HTTP fingerprints. Typically, these websites were redirected to an unknown or bogon IP address, or had other unknown errors which are ambiguous on whether they are true or false positives of censorship. Hence, based on the news reports where the blocked websites were cited, confirmed blockings were further found by comparing available measurements on OONI. In particular for this study, we would mark them as confirmed blockings if there are more than 30 measurements and have an anomaly rate of more than 1% throughout the one-year period of study, in addition to manually checking the OONI measurements by cross-checking across networks, countries and time periods.

For this round of reporting in 2024, the confirmed blockings were further consolidated based on OONI’s existing fingerprints and heuristics processed on the data during the coverage period, in addition to taking into account a weighted anomaly ratio, measurement count and past analysis of the country. In summary, these were the rules applied to obtain this year’s list of confirmed and likely blockings.

Confirmed blockings		Likely blockings or inaccessible
Malaysia	Confirmed by OONI only	None
Myanmar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmed by heuristics (govt block page) Confirmed by OONI (govt block page) 	High weighted anomaly ratio and confirmed by news report/ block notice
Thailand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmed by heuristics (govt block page) Confirmed by OONI (govt block page) 	High weighted anomaly ratio
Philippines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmed by heuristics (govt block page) Confirmed by OONI (govt block page) Confirmed by news report/ block notice 	High weighted anomaly ratio
India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmed by OONI with at least 5 counts Confirmed by heuristics (govt block pages) 	High weighted anomaly ratio
Indonesia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmed by OONI with at least 5 counts Confirmed by heuristics (govt block pages) 	High weighted anomaly ratio
Vietnam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmed by heuristics (govt block page) Confirmed by news report/ block notice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High weighted anomaly ratio Confirmed by OONI (due to being ISP redirects)
Cambodia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmed by news report/ block notice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High weighted anomaly ratio Confirmed by OONI (due to being ISP redirects)
Hong Kong	None	High weighted anomaly ratio

Weighted anomaly ratio: It is calculated by finding the ratio of the Anomaly and Confirmed counts over the total measurements per ASN factoring weights based on number of measurements per domain and per ASN. A high anomaly ratio is when the P90 of the anomaly ratio of a domain exceeds 90%.