Advancement of Digital Rights and Challenges within Southeast Asia

Nenden Sekar Arum

Southeast Asia Freedom of Expression Network

Thursday, May 29th 2025

Southeast Asia Freedom of Expression Network (SAFEnet) is advocating for the realization of a digital space that upholds human rights values for all. To achieve this vision, SAFEnet describes its mission as defending digital rights, including the right to Internet access, the right to free expression, and the right to safety in digital spaces.

Main program

Policy Advocacy

Victims Support

Capacity Building

Solidarity

What is Digital Rights?

Human rights and legal protections related to the use and access of digital technologies. These rights are extensions of existing human rights in the digital environment, ensuring individuals' freedoms and protections in the online space.

Rights to Access to Information and Internet **Rights to Privacy**
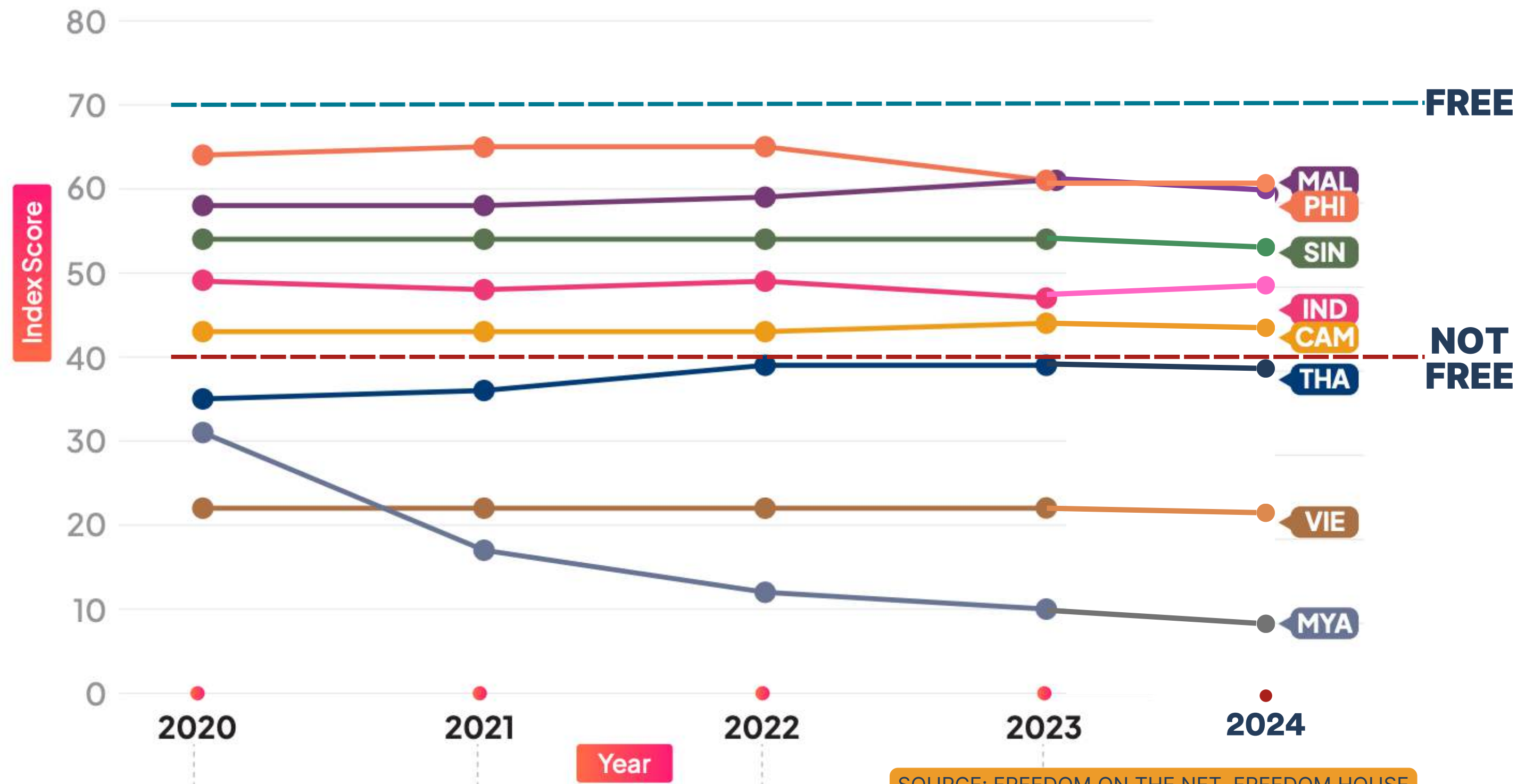
Online Freedom of Expression **Rights to Feel Safe Online**
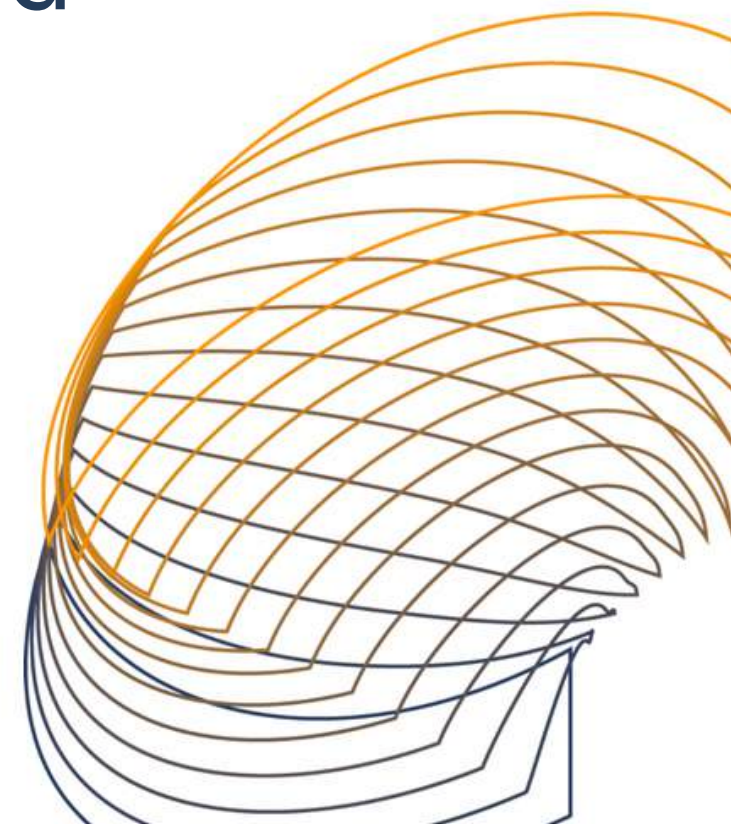
Digital Rights Situation

SAFEnet

Defending Digital Rights in Southeast Asia

Internet Shutdown

What does Digital Rights Violence look like in Southeast Asia?

BBC

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Myanmar coup: Internet shutdown as crowds protest against military

7 February 2021

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Tens of thousands of people take part in the largest protest in Myanmar in more than a decade

Myanmar's military rulers have shut down the country's internet as thousands of people joined the largest rally yet against Monday's coup.

A near-total internet blackout is in effect with connectivity falling to 16% of ordinary

The Jakarta Post

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NEWS • NATIONAL

Internet ban during Papua antiracist unrest ruled unlawful

The Jakarta State Administrative Court (PTUN) ruled on Wednesday that it was unlawful for the government to shut down the internet in Papua and West Papua during heightened security tensions caused by antiracism protests in the two provinces last year.

Moch. Fiqih Prawira Adjie (The Jakarta Post)

Jakarta • Wed, June 3, 2020

#FreeWestPapua
KITA TIDAK MINTA
MAAF-MAAFAN
KITA MINTA BERIKAN

SAFEnet Defending Digital Rights in Southeast Asia

Digital/cyber attacks

What does Digital Rights Violence look like in Southeast Asia?

ALJAZEERA News ⌄ Israel War on Gaza Features Opinion Sport Video

News | Freedom of the Press

Vietnam's battalions of 'cyber-armies' silencing online dissent

'Force 47', thought to be 10,000-strong, seen as government's online enforcers as new cybercrime law takes effect.

Vietnam has a population of 96 million, with more than 60 million people having their presence on the social media platform Facebook [File: Luong Thai Linh/EPA]

By **Adam Bemma**
17 Jan 2020

Hanoi, Vietnam – Wearing his trademark black fedora, human rights defender Anh

Reuters World ⌄ Business ⌄ Markets ⌄ Sustainability ⌄ More ⌄

Technology

Indonesian anti-graft activists complain of digital attacks

By **Kate Lamb** and **Fanny Potkin**

May 25, 2021 6:14 PM GMT+7 · Updated 3 years ago

A hooded man holds a laptop computer as cyber code is projected on him in this illustration picture taken on May 13, 2017. Top U.S. fuel pipeline operator Colonial Pipeline has shut its entire network after a cyber attack, the company said on Friday. REUTERS/Kacper Pempel/Illustration/ *Purchase Licensing Rights* ⬀

SAFEnet — Defending Digital Rights in Southeast Asia

What does Digital Rights Violence look like in Southeast Asia?

Weaponizing the law to suppress the freedom of expression

CNN World — World / Asia

Progressive Thai lawmaker sentenced to six years for insulting the monarchy

By Helen Regan, CNN

4 minute read · Updated 12:33 AM EST, Thu December 14, 2023
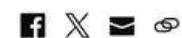
Parliament member Rukchanok Srinork of Thailand's opposition Move Forward party arrives at the criminal court in Bangkok, Thailand, on December 13, 2023. Sopha Saelee/AP

(CNN) — A progressive Thai lawmaker was sentenced to six years in prison Wednesday on charges of insulting the monarchy and other related offenses over two social media posts, according to the advocacy group Thai Lawyers for Human Rights.

Rukchanok Srinok, 29, a lawmaker with the opposition Move Forward Party, was found guilty of lese majeste and breaching the Computer Crimes Act by Thailand's Criminal Court


MONGABAY — NEWS & INSPIRATION FROM NATURE'S FRONTLINE

Mongabay Series: Indonesian Fisheries

Indonesian court jails environmentalist for flagging illegal farms in marine park

by Basten Gokkon on 4 April 2024

- An Indonesian court has sentenced an environmental activist to seven months in jail for a Facebook post in which he criticized the growing problem of illegal shrimp farms operating inside a marine park.
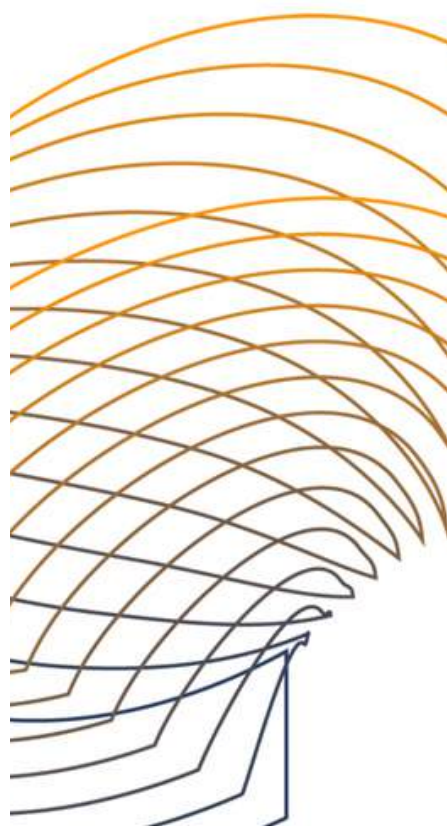
Online censorship

What does Digital Rights Violence look like in Southeast Asia?

iMAP 2023 Internet Censorship Report - Interactive Dashboard

Resource Type:
Data, Surveys, Fact Sheets

**iMAP 2023
Internet Censorship Report
(1 July 2022 - 30 June 2023)**

Filter this report by country:

Country

Number of blockings
1.786

Chart 1: Country location and background metrics

AFRIKA

Google

Pintasan keyboard   Data peta ©2024   Persyaratan

Population (mil.)
2.078,2

Internet penetration
69%

Mobile subscriptions
(per 100 inhabitants)
144

ICCPR ratification
Yes

Religion
Buddhism: 93.5%, Islam: 5.4%, Christianity: 1.1%; Others: < 0.1%

Freedom on the Net score (over 100)
44 - Partly free

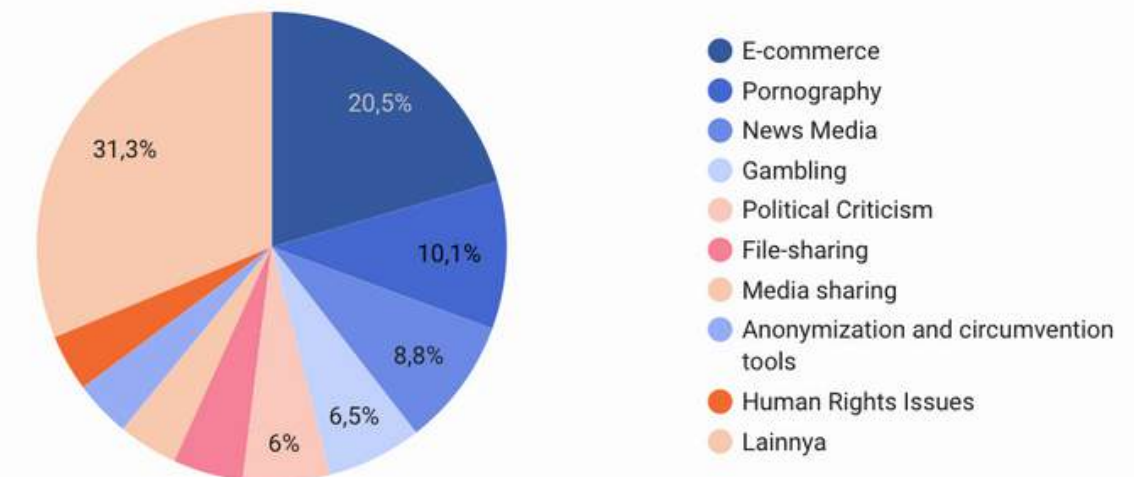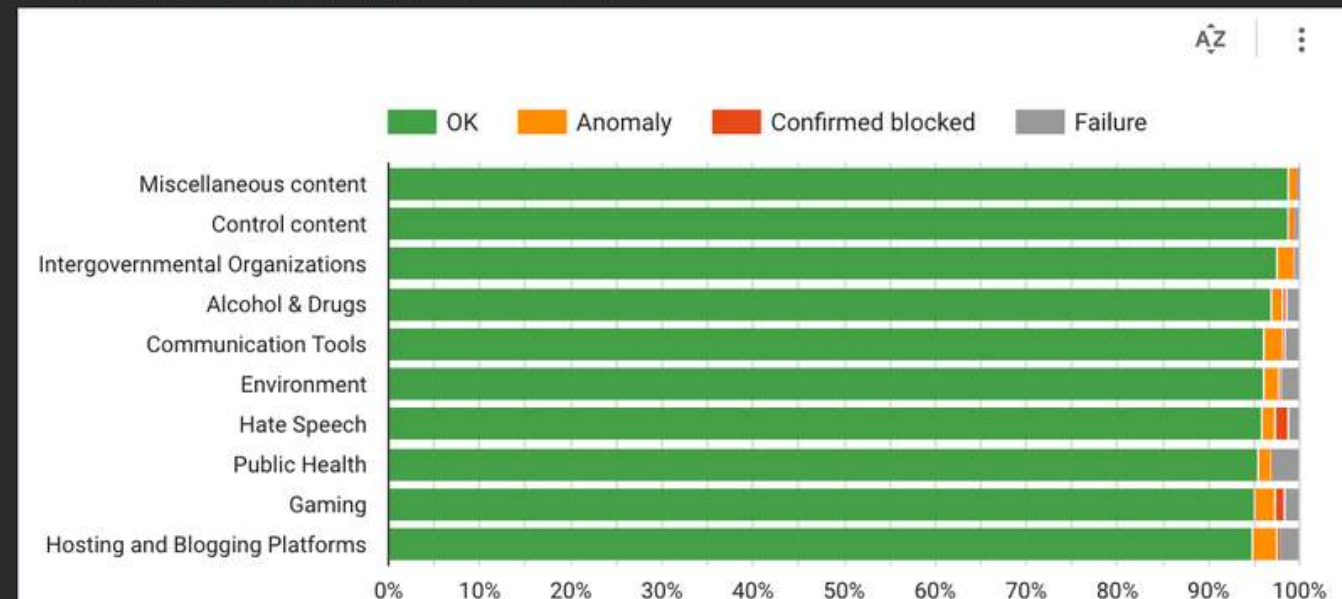**Chart 2: Confirmed blockings by website category**

31,3%

20,5%

10,1%

8,8%

6,5%

6%

- E-commerce
- Pornography
- News Media
- Gambling
- Political Criticism
- File-sharing
- Media sharing
- Anonymization and circumvention tools
- Human Rights Issues
- Lainnya

Chart 3: Results of testing by website category

OK   Anomaly   Confirmed blocked   Failure

Miscellaneous content
Control content
Intergovernmental Organizations
Alcohol & Drugs
Communication Tools
Environment
Hate Speech
Public Health
Gaming
Hosting and Blogging Platforms

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

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Defending Digital Rights in Southeast Asia

Frequent Data Breach

What does Digital Rights Violence look like in Southeast Asia?

malaymail

HOME MALAYSIA SINGAPORE MONEY WORLD LIFE EAT/DRINK SHOWBIZ OPINION SPORTS TECH/GADGETS

MALAYSIA

Report: Malaysia's data breach cases hit all-time high, with four-fold increase recorded in 2023

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Jun 3, 2024

INQUIRER.NET

Today's Paper

NATION

Over 1M records from NBI, PNP, other agencies leaked in massive data breach

By: Sofia Abrogar - @inquirerdotnet   INQUIRER.net / 02:37 PM April 19, 2023

37   f   X   ☺   🔖   💬 44   70%

Republic of the Philippines
Professional Regulation Commission
Regional Office No. 02
Tuguegarao City

CERTIFICATION
OF BOARD RATING

This is to certify that according to the records of this Commission, the following appear:

Name of Examinee   :
Examination Taken   : CRIMINOLOGIST
Name of Board   : Criminology
Date of Examination   : June, 2019
Application No.   :

SUBJECTS	RATINGS
Criminal Jurisprudence and Procedure	77.00
Law Enforcement Administration	87.00
Criminal Detection, Investigation and Prevention	77.00
Criminalistics	85.00
Correctional Administration	77.00
Criminal Sociology, Ethics and Human Relations	78.00
GENERAL AVERAGE RATING	80.75 %
Remarks	PASSED

Tuguegarao, Philippines
August 29, 2019

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CEBUDAILYNEWS
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WWW
Zelensky in PH to promote peace summit he says China, Russia trying to undermine

Surveillance using GPS Tracking, spyware, AI

What does Digital Rights Violence look like in Southeast Asia?

THE CITIZEN LAB · munk school OF GLOBAL AFFAIRS & PUBLIC POLICY · UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

RESEARCH   NEWS   ABOUT

Research > Targeted Threats

GeckoSpy
Pegasus Spyware Used against Thailand's Pro-Democracy Movement

By John Scott-Railton[1], Bill Marczak[1], Irene Poetranto[1], Bahr Abdul Razzak[1], Sutawan Chanprasert[2], and Ron Deibert[1]

[1] Citizen Lab, University of Toronto   [2] DigitalReach

July 17, 2022

Key Findings

- We discovered an extensive espionage campaign targeting Thai pro-democracy protesters, and activists calling for reforms to the monarchy.
- We forensically confirmed that at least 30 individuals were infected with NSO Group's Pegasus spyware.
- The observed infections took place between October 2020 and November 2021.
- The ongoing investigation was triggered by notifications sent by Apple to Thai civil society members in November 2021. Following the notification, multiple recipients made contact with civil society groups, including the Citizen Lab.

Suzanne Smalley
May 2nd, 2024

Technology
Privacy
Nation-state
News

Get more insights with the Recorded Future Intelligence Cloud. Learn more.

What is Threat Intelligence

Investigation uncovers substantial spyware exports to Indonesia

Powerful and invasive foreign commercial spyware and surveillance products are being procured by or deployed in Indonesia, with the country's national police and cyber agency among the top recipients or users of the technology.

The findings, released Thursday by Amnesty International's Security Lab, uncover a sprawling international ecosystem of vendors, brokers and resellers supporting spyware exports to Indonesia. That ecosystem is populated in part by notorious commercial surveillance companies Intellexa, Candiru and Q Cyber Technologies, which is tied to the NSO Group, the company behind the highly invasive Pegasus spyware.

Shadowy commercial networks obscured the exports of the surveillance technology to Indonesia, Amnesty International said, making it extremely hard for national and international judicial authorities, regulators and others to track and monitor the sales,

The sprawling spyware ecosystem supplying Indonesian authorities with the invasive technology has been enabled by what Amnesty referred to in a press release as a "systemic lack of information on dual-use surveillance transfers."

Dual-use technologies are those that can be used for either civilian or military purposes.

Using open-source intelligence such as commercial trade databases, investigators found "numerous spyware imports or deployments" between 2017 and 2023 by both Indonesian corporations and state agencies, with Singapore often serving as a hub for the trafficking.

The report said many of the spyware imports were transferred through firms located in Singapore that appear to have been designed to facilitate
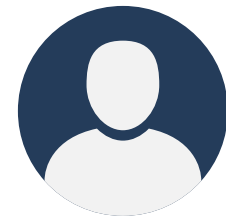
Key Actors

SAFEnet

Defending Digital Rights in Southeast Asia

State
- Internet Shutdown
- Online censorship
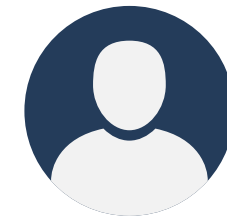- Legal frameworks
- Surveillance

Private corporations
- Data exploitation
- Surveillance tools
- Online censorship/ content moderation
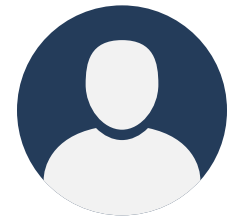
Cyber Criminal
- Data breaches
- Cyber attacks

Activist and HRDs

Journalists & Media

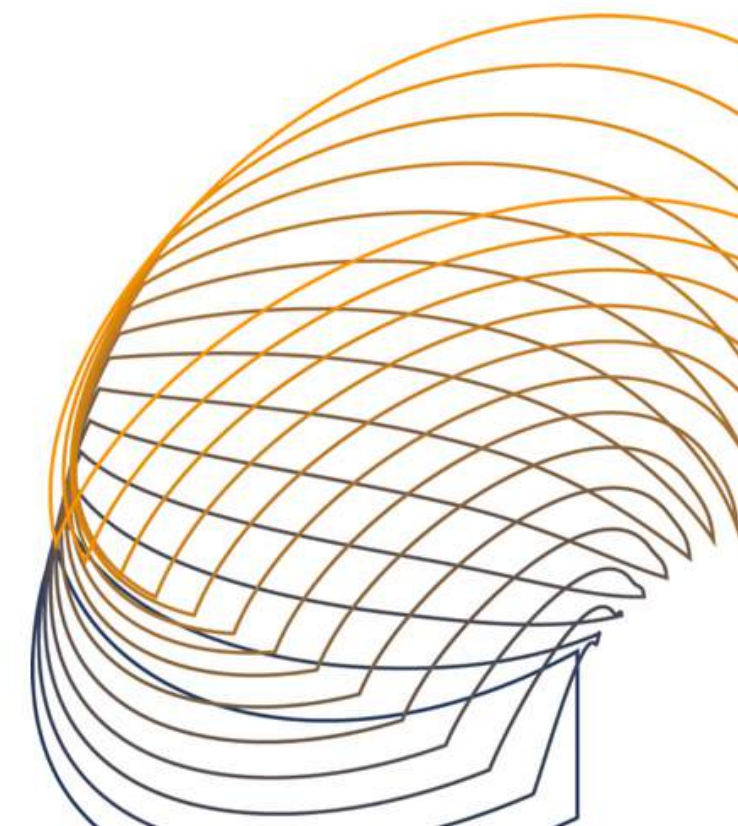**Online Citizens**

Minority Groups

Youth and Children

- Online censorship/ content moderation
- Surveillance and harrassment
- Privacy violence

Challenges

Government pushback against Activists

ASEAN Regional Coalition to #StopDigitalDictatorship

Challenges

Everybody is At Risk of Being a Target of the Government

In 2020, SAFEnet documented 22 cases of internet users being charged with Article 27(3) of the ITE Law. An additional 17 were reported in 2021.[44] Data gathered by Amnesty International Indonesia, conversely, shows that the ITE Law was used against approximately 81 people from January 2020 to October 2021, most of whom were accused of defamation.[45] Between January 2019 and December 2022, Amnesty International Indonesia documented that at least 1,021 human rights defenders faced prosecution, arrests, attacks, and threats, under the defamation article in ITE Law.[46] SAFEnet has also highlighted a concerning trend, reporting a total of 89 cases of criminalisation related to these articles from January to October

2023.[47] These findings support the longstanding observation of activists and HRDs that the ITE Law is routinely misused to criminalise hundreds of people simply for exercising their right to freedom of expression online.[48] A 2023 report by FORUM-ASIA and KontraS shows a new pattern in officials' efforts to suppress criticism: Cease-and-Desist letters. Started in 2021, this type of action consists of public officials redacting letters to file lawsuits against activists, often citing defamation, insults, or fake news. The approach often ends in criminalisation, with the accused facing charges and further pressure from the government to cease their activism. This also occurred in Haris Azhar and Fatia Maulidiyanti's cases detailed below.[49]
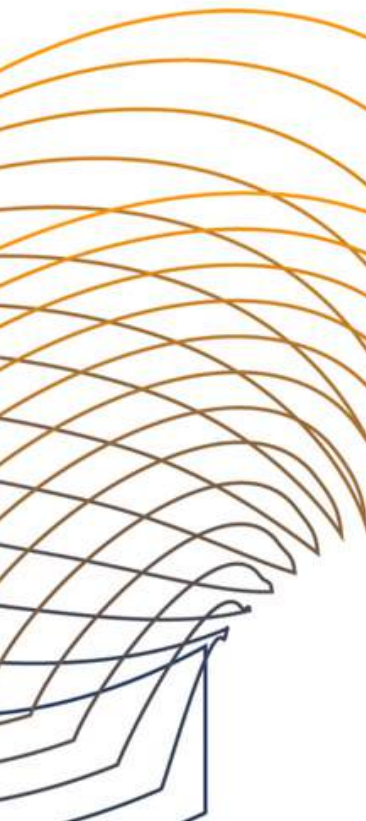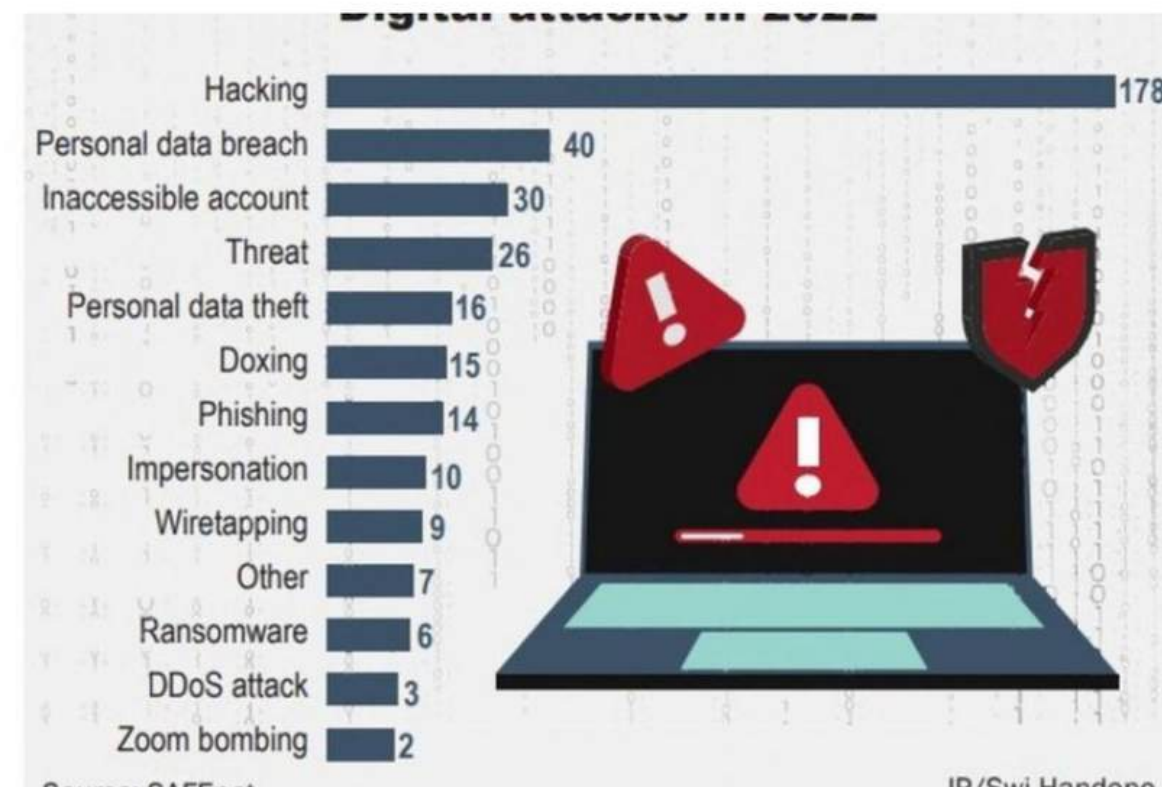
Digital security risks

Challenges

Cyberattacks to rise ahead of 2024 Indonesia elections: SAFEnet report

The report found that digital attacks in the country had more than doubled over the past two years, from 147 discrete instances in 2020 to 302 last year.

Nur Janti
The Jakarta Post

Digital attacks in 2022

Hacking	178
Personal data breach	40
Inaccessible account	30
Threat	26
Personal data theft	16
Doxing	15
Phishing	14
Impersonation	10
Wiretapping	9
Other	7
Ransomware	6
DDoS attack	3
Zoom bombing	2

Source: SAFEnet

JP/Swi Handono

Digital attacks in 2022.(SAFEnet/JP/Swi Handono)

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The Kathmandu Post

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Defending Digital Rights
in Southeast Asia

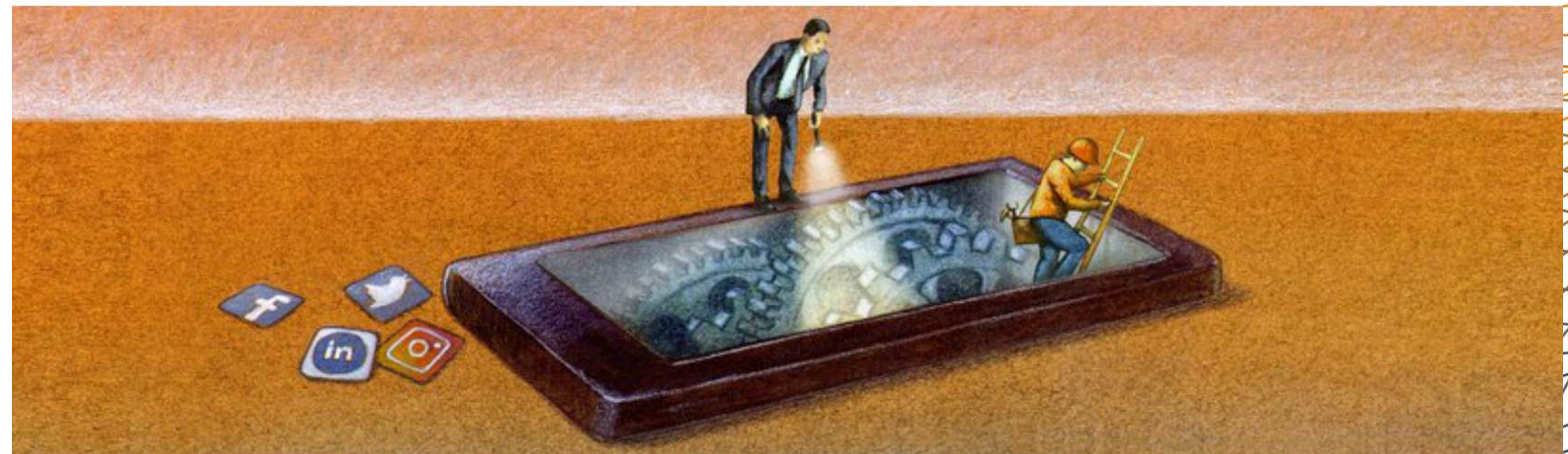**Big corporate business model**

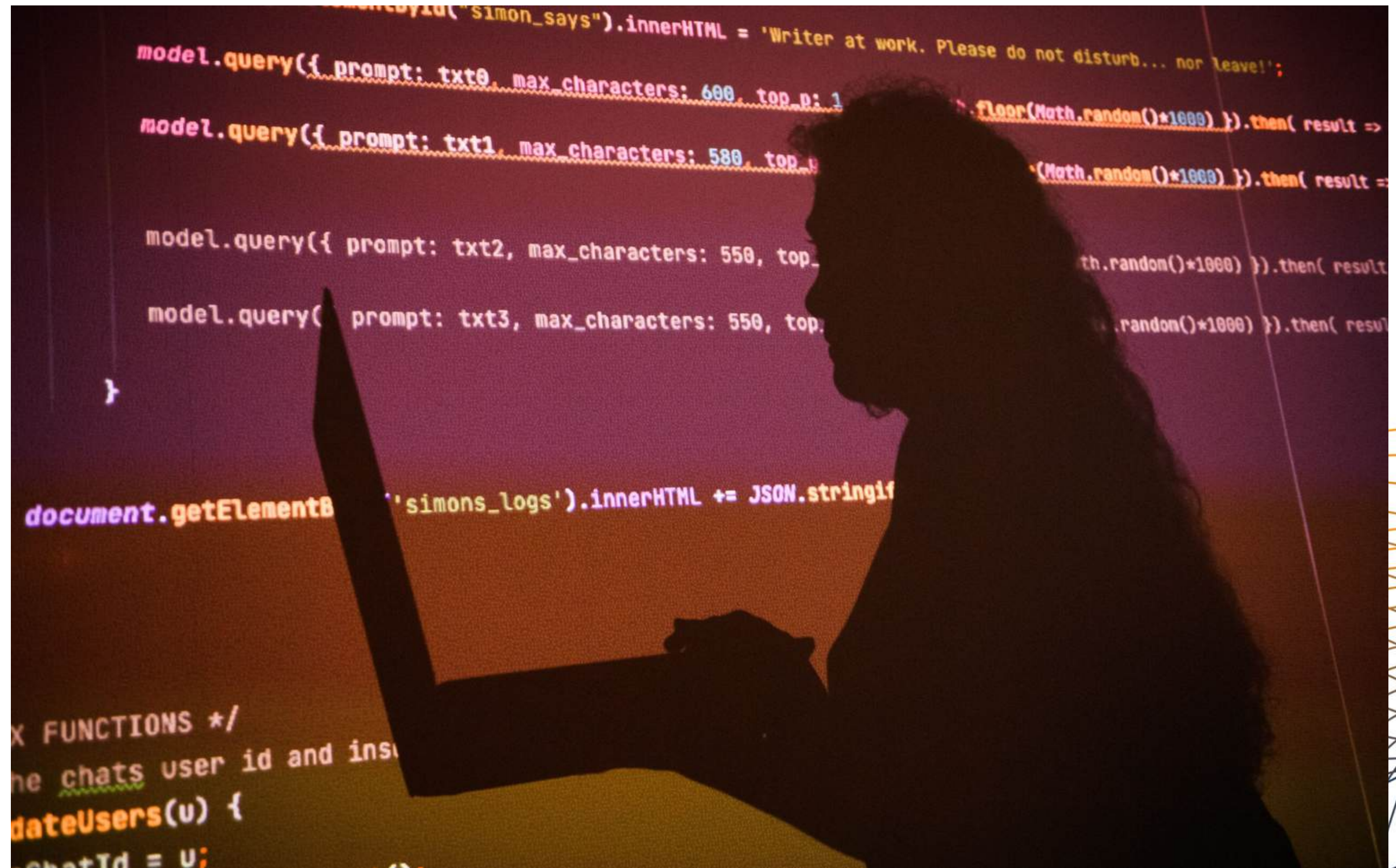## Challenges

NEW
AMERICA

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OPEN TECHNOLOGY INSTITUTE

It's Not Just the Content, It's the Business
Model: Democracy's Online Speech
Challenge

A Report from Ranking Digital Rights

By: Nathalie Maréchal, Ellery Roberts Biddle

Last updated on March 17th, 2020

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