

**Asia Pacific Regional Internet Governance Forum (APrIGF)**  
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# **Content Moderation Policy: Advancing Technology for Democracy (Case Studies: Laos and Thailand)**



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# About Manushya Foundation

In Sanskrit, Manushya means ‘Human Being’.

It was founded in 2017 with the vision to build a movement of Equal Human Beings ∞ #WeAreManushyan ∞ Manushya is an Intersectional Feminist organization reinforcing the power of Humans, in particular local communities and women human rights defenders, to fight for Human Rights, Equality & Justice!

## Thematic Focus



We are committed to put “Peoples over Profit” and ensure communities are front and centre in any Business & Human Rights initiatives

BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS



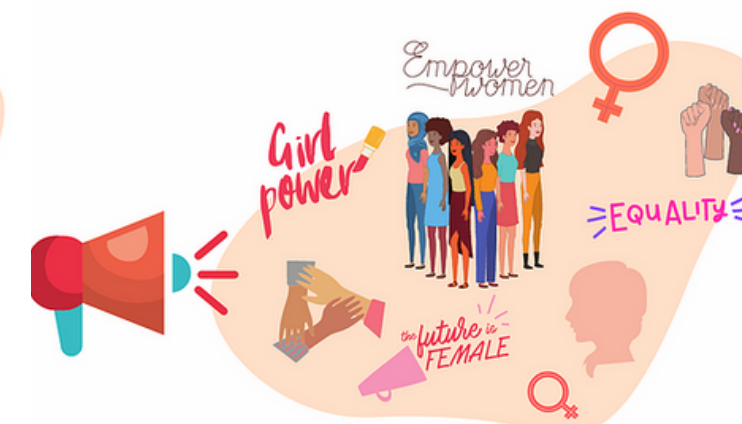
We work towards the promotion and protection of online freedom of expression and online privacy

DIGITAL RIGHTS



We empower communities to be able to meaningfully contribute to UN Human Rights Monitoring Mechanisms, ensuring their voices and needs are taken into account

UN MECHANISMS



We ensure women are central players in all aspects of our work, from within our organization to empowering women to conduct effective human rights research and advocacy

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT



We provide subgrants to marginalized communities who are the most at risk of human rights violations and facing the most adverse impacts of business conducts

RESOURCING HRDS

# OUTLINE

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- 1** Digital dictatorship through **State-led restrictive content moderation policies**
- 2** Digital dictatorship through State-led **disinformation/trolling**
- 3** Digital dictatorship through **Tech companies responses / lack of responses / lack of upholding online freedom & the UNGPs**
- 4** **Our recommendations** for States and companies focus on **concrete actions towards content moderation policy aligned with international human rights standards.**



# Digital dictatorship through State-led restrictive content moderation policies

**What is**  
**#DigitalDictatorship?**



**Online Freedom and Information Control**

**Vague Application of National Security**

# Digital dictatorship through State-led restrictive content moderation policies

**What is #ContentModeration?**

**Why is the decent content moderation policy interlinked to democracy?**



## What happens in Laos?



- Extensive Government Control
- Internet and Social Media Oversight
- The rise to significant human rights concerns within LAOS, more recently is #JusticeForJack, signifying a restrictive content moderation policy



# Digital dictatorship through State-led restrictive content moderation policies

## Thailand



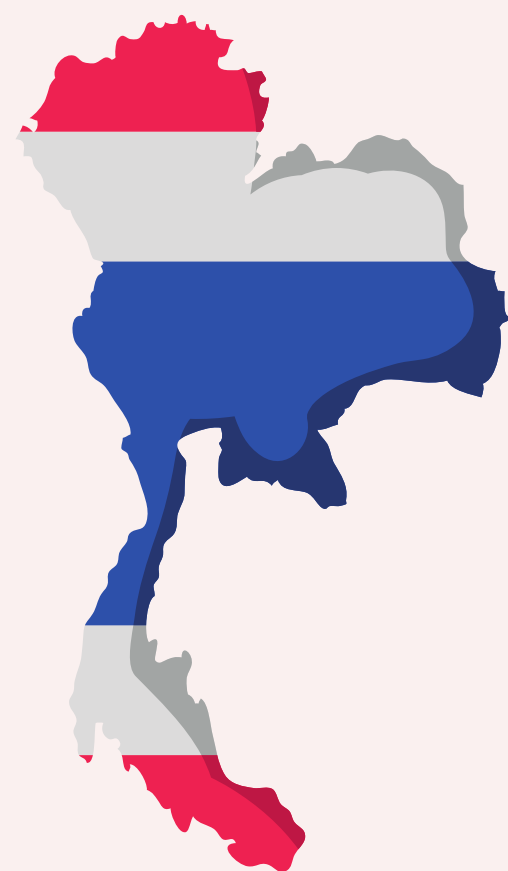
**Governed by the Ministerial Notification of the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society (MDES), known as the "ministerial decree," effective from December 25, 2022 onwards**  
**result in:**

- Stringent Time Limits for Content Takedown
- Loosely-Defined Basis and Lack of Oversight
- Problematic Reference to Computer Crime Act (CCA)'s Section 14
- Compulsory Compliance with Complaints

# Digital dictatorship through State-led restrictive content moderation policies

## Thailand

**Significant human rights concerns, signifying a restrictive content moderation policy**



- Computer Crime Act is well-known for being a tool to prosecute online dissent. **More than 181 out of 199 cases have been charged** from July 2020 - July 2023 (TLHR).
- In 2022, 6,024 URLs have been restricted by MDES, 4,035 URLs **for alleged insults to the monarchy and national security**



# Digital dictatorship through State-led disinformation/trolling

Disinformation



Misinformation



# Digital dictatorship through State-led disinformation/trolling

**"In dictator regimes, the state is the primary source of disinformation, while state-sponsored social media trolls target vulnerable groups to suppress their freedom of speech. This approach obstructs the development of genuine democracies in Laos and Thailand."**



# Digital dictatorship through State-led restrictive content moderation policies

## Why is the decent content moderation policy **interlinked to democracy?**



**Growing Cyber Army in Thailand and the emergence of a cyber army focused on Information Operations (IOs), aiming to spread state-sponsored disinformation.**

- **Military-Backed Information Manipulation:** used to shape public opinion and influence discourse, particularly targeting opposition figures, aiming to disseminate pro-government narratives and content.
- **October 2020, Twitter** took down over 900 accounts linked to the Royal Thai Army.
- **March 2021, Facebook** removed 185 accounts/groups involved in information-influencing operation, allegedly linked to the military.

**Furthermore, in recent years, there has been a rise in cyber attacks against Thai organizations, with an average of 2,388 attacks per week in 2023, raise significant concerns about the safety and security of using online platforms.**



# DISINFORMATION TARGETING WHRDS

## IN THAILAND'S DEEP SOUTH

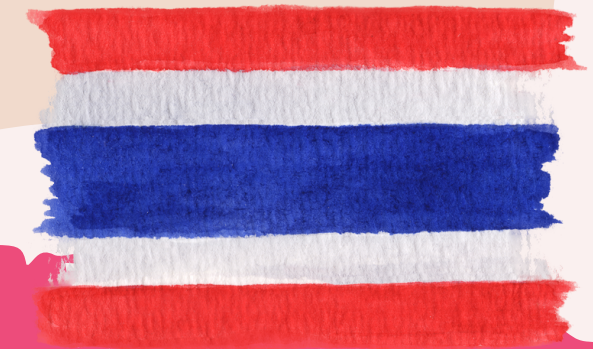
### ANKHANA NEELAPAIJIT AND ANCHANA HEEMINA



Source: <https://www.protectioninternational.org>

### Disinformation:

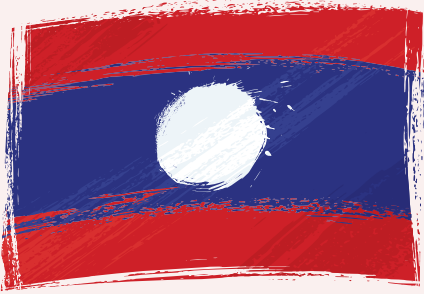
- Orchestrated by ISOC via Information Operations (IO).
- False information spread on platforms like Facebook and pulony.blogspot.com.
- Undermined WHRDs' vital work.



### Legal Proceedings and Outcome:

- Preliminary hearings in Bangkok Civil Court (May 2022).
- WHRDs sued ISOC for disinformation to manipulate public perception.
- Case dismissed (Feb 16, 2023) due to insufficient evidence.
- Raises accountability and human rights defender protection concerns.

# HOW STATE-LED DISINFORMATION WAS USED AGAINST EMILIE PALAMY PRADICHIT



Lao ▶ English  
 ໂສມໜ້ານາງ Sivid Nor ລູກສາວອາດິດນາຍທະຫານຫຸ່ນວຽງຈັນທີ່ອົບພະຍົບຫຼົບລີ້ຢູ່ຝລັ່ງເສດ.ປະຈຸບັນແມ່ນມາເຄື່ອນໄຫວຢູ່ໄທ ເພື່ອປຸກລະດົມກຸ່ມແຮງງານລາວຊ້າຊາດຢູ່ປະເທດໄທໃຫ້ມີແນວຄິດກະບົດຊ້າຊາດຕໍ່ຕ້ານໂຄ້ນລົ້ມລັດຖະບານລາວ.  
 ນາງຊີວິດນໍ ຊອກທຸກຊ່ອງທາງເພື່ອປຸກລະດົມແຮງງານລາວຈໍານວນນຶ່ງໃຫ້ລັກຂ້າມມາກໍ່ຄວາມສະຫງົບໂດຍມີຄ່າຈ້າງ500ບາດ-3000ບາດ.  
 ປະຈຸບັນນາງນີ້ມີຂາຄູ່ໂດຍແມ່ນ ທ້າວຕະ ຫຼື ທ້າວໄຈເຊັຟ ໃນນາມເຟສບຸກຊວ່ຍສ້າງກະແສປັນປ່ວນ.  
 Sivid Nor's face, daughter of former Vientiane army who has been escaped in France.  
 Nowadays it's moving in Thailand to wake up his national laborers group in Thailand to have anti-government hate ideas.  
 She is looking for all ways to raise the number of Laos workers to cross the peace with 500 baht-3000 baht.  
 Now she has a pair of legs by Mr. Ta or Mr.

ຂອ້ຍເປັນຄົນລາວ ຂອ້ຍຮັກສປປລາວໝາຍເລກ01's post  
 Joseph Akaravong ອຢູ່ກັບ Emilie Pradichit 6 ຄ.ພ. • ໑  
 ອ້ອຍເອັມມິລີ ຄົນລາວ ສັນຊາດຝຣັ່ງ ຜູ້ເຮັດວຽກກ່ຽວກັບສິດທິມະນຸດ ເປັນທີ່ຮູ້ຈັກຫລາຍໃນແວດວົງ NGOs ແລະອົງກອນຂອງເພິ່ນຍັງມີສ່ວນໃນການຂຽນລາຍງານ UPR ຂອງປະເທດລາວ... ດູເພີ່ມເຕີມ  
 Sivid Nor 45 ນາທີ • ໑  
 ງະບອບຄອມມູນິສເກງແຕ່ າບປາມຄົນແບບຜະເດັດການ. ໂບ່ພາກັນໄປເກງທາງດ້ານປາບປາມ າວາມທຸກຍາກຂອງປະຊາຊົນສະ າອນ ເລື້ອງລັກອອກລັກເຂົ້າ ປະເທດກໍຈະບໍ່ມີອີກແນ່ນອນ ເດີ ຳ້າວ... ດູເພີ່ມເຕີມ  
 ຳເຕືອນ ໄຟລັກເຂົ້າປະເທ ຖືກຈໍາລຸກຕະຫລອດຊີວິດ

# Digital Dictatorship through Big Tech Companies

Lack of upholding online freedom and intersectionality lenses

Lack of respecting the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs)

Lack of responses



More recently, the “**trusted flaggers**” system established by Meta has become ineffective and seems to be used to subtly influence civil society

## Strategic Approach Needed:

- International development agencies must avoid worsening system flaws and help local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) reduce reliance on platforms. CSOs should focus on holding tech companies accountable. Unfortunately, these CSOs inadvertently support non-adaptive Western giants, and it's time for corporations to invest in mitigating local online harms.
- According to **Internews**, some participating organizations experience treatment similar to regular users, enduring delayed responses, neglect, and unsatisfactory communication from platforms like Meta. In some cases, Meta doesn't react at all or offer any explanation. That allegedly applies even to highly time-sensitive content, **like serious threats and calls for violence.**





**What can and should be  
done to restore the online  
democracies?**




# Recommendations for States

- 1 The governments of Lao PDR and Thailand must uphold international human rights norms concerning the right to freedom of expression and information.**
- 2 Immediate Amendments of rules and laws that impede free speech, independent media, and information access by prioritizing democratic and human rights principles in amending these laws.**
- 3 Leveraging UPR Recommendations**
- 4 Promoting Intersectionality for Inclusive Policies**
- 5 Safety for Human Rights Defenders (HRDs)**
- 6 Preventing Judicial Harassment**
- 7 Ending Authoritarianism**





# Recommendations for **Big Tech Companies**

- 1 Adhere rigorously to the UNGPs on Business and Human Rights.**
  - 2 Embrace the Global Network Initiative Principles concerning Freedom of Expression and Privacy.**
  - 3 Develop precise guidelines and terms of service that define prohibited speech, clarify restriction purposes, and outline content violation assessment procedures.**
  - 4 Maintain a consistent flow of information on official websites, disclosing the legal foundation for government and third-party requests.**
  - 5 Consider alternatives beyond removal, like demotion, labeling, fact-checking, promoting credible sources, and design changes for better public discourse.**
  - 6 Establish an ongoing dialogue with civil society to comprehend the human rights implications of existing and potential measures.**
  - 7 Publicize the findings from human rights impact assessments and public consultations.**
- 



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