



Call for comments on opportunities, challenges and threats to media in the digital age

Key questions and types of input/comments sought

1. a. **What are the key trends, threats or challenges to the freedom, independence, pluralism and diversity of media and the safety of journalists in your country, region, or globally in your view?**

[CIVICUS Monitor](#), a research tool that provides close to real-time data on the state of civil society and civic freedoms in 197 countries and territories, clearly shows how media freedom is facing continuous challenges, both from State and non-State actors. The main worrisome trends consist of recurrent cases of surveillance, detention, summons, criminal defamation charges and censorship, but also intimidation, harassment, physical attacks, and killing of journalists and media professionals. A further trend that threatens to severely jeopardise the freedom, independence, pluralism and diversity of the media is represented by internet shutdowns.

Our data highlights that such troublesome practices do not have particular regional or political connotations, but are present, on the contrary, on a global scale.

Africa. CIVICUS Monitor documented the detention of journalists in at least 24 countries in Africa. Several journalists were arrested in Somalia, where media and journalists [face](#) an ongoing and unrelenting onslaught. Physical attacks, intimidation and harassment of journalists and HRDs have [become](#) increasingly common, especially while covering protests, as witnessed in [Nigeria](#), [Cameroon](#), [Liberia](#), [Mozambique](#) and [Somalia](#). In several countries, journalists were detained on accusations or charges of defamation, an offence that remains criminalised in many countries in the region, as in [DRC](#), [Togo](#), [Uganda](#). Despite the decriminalisation of press offences, journalists [continued](#) to be imprisoned in Guinea on a range of charges, including defamation and 'insulting the head of the state'. Cases of detention of and attacks against journalists are unfortunately common during electoral periods, as was the case for example in Côte d'Ivoire and Ethiopia.

Surveillance of journalists represents a further worrying trend in the region. For example, journalists in South Africa face [surveillance](#) from the authorities, as seen when Jeff Wicks, a journalist from News24, had his phone bugged with a phone tracking device in a bid to establish his sources, following his coverage of discontent within the police force.

Alongside detention, physical attacks and surveillance, journalists are adversely affected by censorship. One form of censorship is the suspension of media outlets and publications as witnessed for example in [Togo](#), [Burkina Faso](#), [Ethiopia](#), [Chad](#) and [Senegal](#). Alongside the suspension of media outlets, there have been some incidents of content being banned, as reported by [CIVICUS Monitor](#), in [Kenya](#), [Uganda](#) and [Eswatini](#).

In 2021, internet restrictions were once again commonplace, often occurring in the context of elections or mass protests. In the Republic of the Congo, access to the internet and social media was [shut down](#) hours before the start of the presidential elections on 21 March 2021.. Likewise, access to the internet was [blocked](#) for 10 days in February following



post-electoral protests and clashes in Niger. Internet and telephone restrictions, including full shutdowns and restrictions on social media, also occurred in [Tanzania](#) surrounding its general elections on 2 October 2021, in [Chad](#) in February 2021, coinciding with a raid on the residence of opposition leader Yaya Dillo prior to Chad's April 2021 presidential elections, and in [Guinea](#) following the announcement of the provisional results of the controversial presidential elections on 18 October 2020.

Europe and Central Asia. The use of intimidation and harassment as a tactic to deter, among others, journalists was documented in at least 34 countries in Europe and Central Asia. A culture of impunity is growing in the region, as authorities fail to hold perpetrators of harassment and intimidation to account. Physical attacks on journalists, which often took place while covering protests, were documented in at least 28 countries. There are also several concerning cases of killings in the region. In the Netherlands investigative journalist Peter de Vries [was killed](#) after being shot at least five times, with his death reportedly linked to the most-wanted criminal in the Netherlands. In Greece, TV reporter Giorgos Karaivaz [was shot dead](#) in front of his house in Athens, with authorities confirming that the hit was linked to organised crime groups. The killing of journalists was also documented in [Belarus](#), [Georgia](#) and [Turkey](#). Intimidation, harassment and physical attacks on journalists were often perpetrated both by protesters and the authorities during protests, including during COVID-19-related protests. Senior politicians at the highest levels, including prime ministers and presidents, continue to intimidate and harass civil society personnel and journalists, as happened in [Slovenia](#), [Croatia](#) and [Serbia](#). In 2021, Belarus authorities [have raided](#), attacked, detained and charged hundreds of journalists

Political meddling is also a serious concern in the region. In Poland, Polska Press, one of the country's largest media publishers, was [taken over](#) by state-owned oil company PKN Orlen, whose CEO has close ties with the ruling Law and Justice (PIS) party. Additionally, the so-called anti-TVN bill, which [was approved](#) by Poland's parliament in September 2021, limits media ownership of organisations from outside the European Economic Area to no more than a 49 per cent stake in any Polish media firm. Impartiality of Czech national radio has also come [under threat](#), with pro-ruling party council members trying to influence broadcasts. Additionally, the [acquisition](#) of Central European Media Enterprises, which develops and produces content for 30 TV channels in five Central and Eastern European countries, by Czech billionaire Petr Kellner, who is known to have close ties with China, raises concerns of censorship.

Restrictive laws are often used to jeopardise freedom of expression. In Belarus, for example, Lukashenko [approved](#) amendments to the laws on mass media and public events, which prohibit journalists from covering unsanctioned protest actions. In Hungary, the Orbán government passed a raft of anti-LGBTQI+ legislation amid the pandemic, including bans on LGBTQI+ media.

Similar tactics are often used by Central Asian governments in attempts to silence critics. In Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan the authorities [continues](#) to intimidate and harass independent journalists, including those who now are in exile. A further tool at the disposal of governments to silence critics and protesters are internet shutdowns, as demonstrated by the on-going crisis in Kazakhstan.



Middle East & North Africa. Censorship remains a major area of concern, [documented](#) in at least 11 out of 19 countries. One form of censorship is internet shutdowns, as seen in Iran when the authorities [closed down](#) the internet after protests broke out in relation to reports that the Islamic Republic Revolutionary Guards had opened fire on a group of unarmed civilian fuel porters, killing at least 10 people. In some countries, social media platforms were targeted for censorship, as, for example, in [Oman](#) and in Jordan, where the authorities [disrupted](#) access to Facebook Live following the oxygen shortages that led to deaths of COVID-19 patients. In Palestine, activists and journalists were [censored](#) on social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube, with CSO groups accusing social media giants of 'closely cooperating' with the Israeli regime and its allies to censor Palestinian speech. In May 2021 alone, over 770 digital violations of content created by pro-Palestine users were recorded. A two-day internet shutdown was also carried out in parts of western Amman, with VPNs being cut during this time. The worrying practice of limiting access to information has also been witnessed in Jordan, where the authorities has severely hindered access to information by blocking the internet, including social media, when there are politically sensitive developments. Additionally, in April 2021, in the aftermath of the alleged coup attempt, a gagging order banned the media from reporting on these developments.

In other instances, censorship was introduced through legislative changes. In Egypt, for example, the penal code was [amended](#) to impose a fine on anyone who photographs, records, excerpts, broadcasts, publishes or publicly displays the proceedings of a criminal court session, without the permission of the president of the court, and giving the court the right to confiscate devices used, erase their content or destroy them. The confiscation of devices and deletion of content was also a censorship tactic used in the UAE, as was seen when Ahmed Etoum, a Jordanian resident of the UAE, was [sentenced](#) to 10 years in prison followed by deportation, confiscation of his devices, deletion of incriminating posts and the shutdown of his social media accounts, in retaliation against his peaceful Facebook posts criticising the Jordanian government.

More blatant forms of censorship were seen in countries such as Iraq, where authorities, outrightly [banned](#) the muezzin and preacher of the Great Mosque in Kalakji sub-district from giving speeches, and also dismissed him from his job as a preacher, in retaliation against a Friday sermon that was critical of the Kurdistan Regional Government. In Tunisia, as President Saïed dismissed the prime minister and suspended parliament, police [raided](#) the Tunis headquarters of Al Jazeera TV, evicting its staff and temporarily closing down the office.

Additionally, the increasing use of surveillance technology across the MENA region is causing journalists, among others, to [engage](#) in self-censorship for fear of being targeted by the authorities, with reports indicating that a staggering scale of surveillance of HRDs, journalists, bloggers and internet activists has been facilitated by Israeli NSO Group's Pegasus spyware in recent years.

The detention and physical harassment of journalists have been reported in at least 9 out of 19 countries. States use, indeed, criminal and legal systems to intimidate journalists and silence dissent. For example, in Palestine, at least 13 journalists were [held](#) administratively by the Israeli authorities in May 2021, after covering clashes between Palestinians and



Israeli forces. In Yemen, security forces in Hadramaut Governorate [arrested](#) several journalists for covering a peaceful protest. In Egypt, Tawfik Ghanem, a retired journalist, was [arrested and detained](#) for alleged 'membership of a terrorist group'. In Iraq, security forces in Kirkuk Governorate [detained](#) five journalists who were covering security incidents in the village of Shaal, and only released them after more than two hours of interrogation. Other journalists were arbitrarily detained in Iraq, including Dalman Faraj Khanki, who was arrested because of his social media posts.

Americas. Arbitrary police interrogations, threats of trumped-up charges, smear messages on social media are just a few of the tactics that have been used, both by state and [non-state actors](#), to intimidate those speaking up, particularly journalists. In 2021, [CIVICUS Monitor](#) documented incidents of intimidation in at least 19 countries of the Americas, often coupled with tactics such as criminalisation or surveillance. Journalists who exposed corruption in COVID-19 vaccine distribution in [Panama](#) and [Peru](#) received death threats. In Brazil, public officials from the Rio de Janeiro mayor's office [organised](#) monitoring of hospitals and blocked journalists from covering COVID-19 stories by intimidating news crews and interviewees. In Mexico, which continues to be one of the deadliest countries in the world for journalists, reporters were often [assaulted](#) by police while covering news stories in public spaces, [targeted](#) during protests and [attacked](#) by public officials and their supporters.

Attacks often happened as reporters and news crews covered protests, with media workers exposed to hostility and assaults. In Paraguay, at least five journalists were [injured](#) in anti-government protests and others had their equipment stolen. In numerous cases reporters were assaulted and detained despite identifying themselves as members of the media, as was the case [Colombia](#), [Panama](#) and the [USA](#). In some cases these attacks [resulted](#) in killings, taking place with impunity in broad daylight. Reporters were killed in at least six other countries of the region. Social media played a significant role in fostering this climate of harassment and intimidation. In [Mexico](#), for example at least six reporters were threatened in an online messaging group; they said continuous harassment had led to self-censorship by the local media.

Strategic disruption of internet services, especially around protests, is a further worrisome trend affecting freedom of expression, as well as, pluralism and diversity of media. In [Venezuela](#), for example, Espacio Público reported that Venezuela's state internet provider, *Compañía Anónima Nacional Teléfonos de Venezuela* (CANTV), [blocked access](#) to YouTube, Periscope and Twitter on 11th June 2020 during the transmission of a forum where opposition leaders were speaking. Users denounced the blockade on social networks shortly before it was confirmed by internet monitoring organisations Ve Sin Filtro and Netblocks.org. According to [Ve Sin Filtro](#), tactical blockades are usually short and seek to silence a specific statement, news or event while it is broadcasting.

CIVICUS documented shooting attacks against journalists in countries such as [Brazil](#), [Chile](#), [Colombia](#) and [Ecuador](#). In Venezuela, a regional office of the national journalists' association was set on fire and [destroyed](#). In Argentina, a journalist was [beaten, kicked and punched](#) by two assailants while live on his radio programme. One of the attackers was a former local official in the municipality where the reporter exposed alleged corruption.



The passing of restrictive laws regarding social media platforms' contents and actions severely restrict fundamental freedoms, especially freedom of expression. In February 2021, for example, Mexico's Senate majority leader presented a [bill](#) to regulate social media platforms, which could constrain freedom of expression in the country. The [proposal](#) would reform Mexico's Federal Telecommunications and Broadcasting Law, requiring that social media companies request authorisation from the telecoms regulator to continue to operate and grant the regulator oversight over policies on users suspended or banned from social media services.

In Nicaragua, at least 16 journalists were [summoned](#) as witnesses in investigations against civil society groups. When questioning the reporters, police officers threatened them with charges if they refused to speak without lawyers present. In Bolivia, HRDs and journalists were [named](#) in lists calling for the lynching of perceived enemies of the governing party.

Asia & Pacific. [CIVICUS](#)' data shows that, in 2021, governments used extra-legal tactics in at least 14 countries in the Asia region to attempt to harass or intimidate, among others, journalists into silence. China continued its unrelenting persecution of HRDs and journalists by putting some under [surveillance and forcing others to leave town](#) ahead of the ruling Chinese Communist Party's centenary celebration in July 2021. Activists were also [barred](#) from international travel or placed under 'residential surveillance in a designated location', a notorious form of state-enforced disappearance. In Hong Kong, media owner Jimmy Lai, founder of independent newspaper Apple Daily, is facing [multiple charges](#). Six of the newspaper's staff and executives were also arrested and the newspaper was forced to close. Journalists in the Philippines continue to face harassment and [spurious charges](#) for their reporting, including Nobel Peace Prize-winner Maria Ressa. The Bangladeshi government launched [smear campaigns](#) and online attacks against journalists who are based abroad for criticising the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, and harassed family members who still live in Bangladesh. In Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir, [raids](#) were conducted on the homes of HRDs and offices of CSOs and newspapers. In addition to the aforementioned worrisome trends, in the East Asia, repressive governments are increasingly using disinformation to rein in dissent while perpetuating power. A deeply worrisome disinformation disorder has fast emerged in a region where state leaders are progressively doubling down on civil liberties, notably freedoms of speech and access to information.

The situation of media freedom, as clearly depicted by CIVICUS' report "[Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and the COVID-19 pandemic: A snapshot of protests and restrictions](#)", has globally further deteriorated since the beginning of COVID-19 pandemic as a consequence of restrictive governments' measures supposedly aimed at curbing the pandemic, but often used as an excuse to crackdown on civic space.

b. To what extent have these trends, threats and challenges emerged, or have been aggravated, because of the policies and practices of digital and social media platforms?



In some instances, social media policies and practices exacerbated the aforementioned trends.

In June 2021, for example, an investigation by the rights group Global Witness [found](#) that Facebook is promoting content that incites violence against Myanmar's coup protesters and amplifies junta misinformation, despite promising to clamp down on the misuse of its platform. According to their [study](#), Facebook's recommendation algorithm continues to invite users to view content that breaches its own policies. After liking a Myanmar military fan page, which did not contain recent posts violating Facebook's policies, the rights group found that Facebook suggested several pro-military pages that contained abusive content.

In [Indonesia](#), media conglomerates have played a vital role in perpetuating the government's narratives, often relying on official spokespersons and declining to tap independent or grassroots sources, especially during conflicts or mass unrest, not wanting to ruffle government feathers.

[Chinese digital and social media platforms](#), such as WeChat and the popular micro-blogging platform Weibo, exacerbate and contribute to the violation of media freedom and freedom of expression online in the country. Chinese surveillance technologies are, indeed, built into such apps, facilitating monitoring of the dissemination of certain ideas and the automatic removal through filtering algorithms of any information that runs counter to the Chinese government's official narrative.

c. Please highlight the gender dimensions of the trends and their consequences for the equality and safety of women journalists as well as media freedom.

Not everyone is evenly affected by civic space restrictions. [Women](#), indeed, are one of the most affected group and this applies also in contexts of limitations of freedom of expression. [CIVICUS Monitor](#) shows that women journalists are often subject to intimidation and smear campaigns, as was the case, for example, in [Lebanon](#) and [Serbia](#). In [El Salvador](#), there has been an alarming increase in hostility toward journalism and attacks on women journalists. According to [Asociación de Periodistas de El Salvador's](#) data (APES), the reports of press freedom violations experienced by women in journalism increased by 165% in 2021. Obstruction of journalistic work, stigmatisation, obstruction of access to public information, intimidation and digital harassment were among the most frequent restrictions reported. The main perpetrators were police, armed forces and public officials from the Executive and Legislature. In [Guatemala](#), on 10 February 2020, news outlets reported that more than 15 Guatemalan women journalists received [harassing calls](#) in which an unknown woman pretended to be an old friend in order to carry out a phishing attack. As denounced by the Association of Journalists of Guatemala and the Freedom of the Press Commission, the caller tried to obtain personal information from the journalists, including their location. In [Brazil](#), on 18 February 2020, politicians connected to Jair Bolsonaro's government voiced insults of a sexual nature against Folha de S. Paulo journalist Patrícia Campos Mello in the context of congressional hearings on fake news in the 2018 presidential campaign. In October 2018, during the electoral campaign, the journalist [reported](#) on an online disinformation campaign allegedly funded illegally by business owners supporting Bolsonaro. [At the time](#), the newspaper and Patrícia Campos Mello faced a backlash, with the journalist receiving several threats and insults for her reporting. On 11th February 2020, an employee



of a digital marketing company allegedly hired to spread smear messages during presidential elections testified that Campos Mello tried to extract information from him in exchange for sexual favours. Several politicians, including Bolsonaro's son, congressman [Eduardo Bolsonaro](#), and two other congressmen, [Carlos Jordy](#) and [Filipe Barros](#), shared and repeated the allegations on Twitter. The president also [commented](#) on the case with sexual innuendo. Folha de S. Paulo subsequently denied these claims, publishing [messages](#) showing that the witness had lied and that he had willingly shared information and documents with the journalist. After the testimony, Mello received hundreds of [harassing messages](#), and dozens of memes featuring her photo circulated on social media, many containing sexual language. In a separate case, journalist Vera Magalhães of TV Cultura and O Estado de S. Paulo was targeted by Bolsonaro and his supporters after revealing on 25th February that the president had [shared](#) a video encouraging participation in demonstrations against the National Congress on WhatsApp. This endorsement of apparent anti-democratic mobilisations sparked [criticism](#) from politicians from the right, centre and left. Following the report, Vera Magalhães said she faced a wave of [harassing](#) and misogynistic messages on social media – in particular after president Bolsonaro [accused](#) her of spreading fake news. In addition, a false social media account exposed fraudulent and [private information](#) on the journalist, including the school where her children study. This type of [doxxing](#) (also sometimes called “doxing”) is a tactic used to intimidate and discredit.

In addition, women journalists are often the target of attacks while covering protests. While in detention, women often faced gender-based violence. In Egypt, freelance journalist Solafa Magdy was physically and sexually [assaulted](#) in police custody.

2. What legislative, administrative, policy, regulatory or other measures have Governments taken to promote press/media freedom, including media independence, pluralism, viability and ownership issues? What has been the impact of these measures? What changes or additional measures would you recommend?

On 1 July 2021, the Gambia's National Assembly [adopted](#) the Access to Information Bill, a result of close collaboration between civil society and government departments. The law is the first step towards enabling the right to access to information in the Gambia. Once fully implemented, it will enable individuals and media outlets to obtain information from public institutions. The process of enacting the Bill has been to a large extent led by civil society through a National Coalition on Access to Information launched in 2018. From the beginning of the process, the Gambia Press Union (GPU), together with the civil society coalition, worked with relevant ministries including the Ministry of Information and Communication and the Ministry of Justice until the Bill was enacted.

In Burundi, President Evariste Ndayishimiye [instructed](#) the national media regulator, the Conseil national de la communication (CNC), to engage with media outlets that had been subjected to sanctions. On 22 February 2021, the CNC lifted a ban on Bonesha, a local radio station. After sustained efforts by media freedom organisations who petitioned the Ombudsperson, Mozambique [revoked](#) Executive Decree 40/2018 in May 2020, which [set](#) exorbitant fees for the registration, licensing and renewal of licences for media outlets and high fees for the accreditation of local and foreign journalists.



3. **What measures are Governments taking to support public service media? What has been the impact of such measures? What changes or additional measures would you recommend?**
4. **What measures have a) Governments b) social media companies c) media companies taken to promote the safety of journalists? What has been the impact of these measures?**
5. **What more can/should be done and by whom? Please also mention any specific laws or measures to address online violence, threats and harassment and what result they have produced.**
6. **a. What measures have Governments taken to investigate and prosecute attacks against journalists, including online violence and harassment against female journalists? What are the barriers to fighting impunity? What changes would you recommend?**

In 2021, some of the most important [positive developments](#) came through justice systems holding perpetrators of violations to account.

In Mexico, perpetrators of the 2017 killings of reporters Javier Valdez Cárdenas and Miroslava Breach Velducea were [convicted and sentenced](#). While such rulings remain the exception, they provide much needed hope for justice in a region where impunity has been the rule. The sense of impunity emboldens perpetrators of attacks and killings, contributing to enduring violence against HRDs and journalists in the Americas. There were also many cases of magistrates [dismissing](#) legal proceedings against journalists and recognising these as censorship attempts.

In Canada, the courts [recognised](#) the frequent misconduct by officers when policing environmental protests and their obstruction of media cover. Supreme Court [established](#) a precedent holding the state responsible in cases of journalists being injured by security forces while covering protests. Additionally, courts [upheld](#) recently introduced legislation to ban strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) and ensured [protections](#) for journalistic sources.

In India, In response to cases lodged by several journalists and activists, India's supreme court ordered an independent [inquiry](#) into whether the government used the Pegasus surveillance software to [spy illegally](#) on journalists, activists and political opponents.

b. The UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Immunity will mark its 20th anniversary in 2022. How do you assess its results and what suggestions would you make to improve it? How can it be more relevant to gender concerns and to the threats posed by digital technology?

7. **What do you believe has been the impact of digital and social platforms on press/media freedom, independence, viability and safety of journalists? What specific recommendations would you make to a) Governments and b) the companies to address or mitigate the detrimental impact ?**



While acknowledging the positive aspects of digital and social media platforms, it is necessary to highlight also their detrimental impact on press/media freedom, especially when digital and media platforms are used and manipulated by governments. An [article](#) - highlighting the findings of the University of Oxford's report, 'The Global Disinformation Order: 2019 Global Inventory of Organised Social Media Manipulation', released in September 2019 indeed - reported that "70 countries [are] now affected by organized social media manipulation, 150 percent more than 2017". As stated in CIVICUS' research [Hijacking & Weaponizing the Narrative: Disinformation Amid Rising Repression in East Asia](#), this represents an [insidious trend](#) characterised by the shift from social media suppression to social media co-option. As stated by Seva Gunitsy, associate professor of political science at the University of Toronto, "élites in autocratic and hybrid regimes have increasingly begun to subvert social media for their own purposes and employing it as a tool of regime stability. As a result, social media is being transformed from an engine of protest to another potential mechanism of regime resilience, in part by shaping public discourse". From "negative control" of the internet, in which regimes attempt "to block, censor, and suppress the flow of communication," such regimes have moved "toward strategies of proactive co-optation in which social media serves certain regime functions. The opposite of internet freedom, therefore, is not necessarily internet censorship but a deceptive blend of control, co-option, and manipulation.

The use of social media to manipulate public opinion is now a global challenge. Cyber troops have been deployed, largely by government agencies and political parties, to influence public opinion. We rue the massive flood of disinformation, a.k.a. 'fake news', being widely pushed on digital platforms by enablers of authoritarian and populist leaders, including institutions and individuals acting on the latter's behest and other political actors with vast powers and resources to deploy. Creating and pushing narratives that distort otherwise meaningful public conversations is an integral, albeit destructive, component of the strategies that have been used by governments for ages. Today's technologies have ramped up these efforts, ushering in a new world disorder that has governments hijacking and weaponizing narratives. Talk about the 'new normal' in the digital age.

Traditional or mainstream media have never seen more sinister and sophisticated attempts to curtail their right to report and help bring counter-narratives to the fore, while activists are constantly caught in the crosshairs of governments simply for speaking out.

8. What policies, procedures or other measures have the media (broadcast, print and digital) sector taken to promote press/media freedom, independence, pluralism, diversity and viability? What has been most successful? What additional measures would you suggest? What steps should the media sector take to promote gender equality?

Important achievements were the results of protests organised and led by media groups.

In Nigeria, on 12 July 2021, several major newspapers, including Premium Times, Vanguard, the Guardian, The Punch and the Daily Sun, [covered](#) their front page with an image of a man with a sealed mouth, captioned "Information Blackout", in [protest](#) against attempts by the government to regulate social media and censor the media. Television and radio stations and online media [joined](#) the protest by displaying the protest banner or playing



jingles in support of the media campaign. In particular, the recent Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC) and the Nigerian Press Council Act (NPA) Amendment Bills were singled out by the media organisations as controversial bills attempting to increase press censorship. The NBC Amendment Act sought to widen the authority of the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission to all "online media", while the [NPC Act](#) would allow for the government to appoint the majority of Board members of the Nigerian Press Council, which is tasked with overseeing the media and establishing a National Press and Ethical Code of Conduct and foresees fines and other punitive measures for media houses and journalists, such as suspension of journalists. Following the Information Blackout campaign, Member of Parliament and sponsor of the bills Olusegun Odeunmi [announced](#) the suspension of the legislative process of the two bills so as to allow consultation with stakeholders. After sustained efforts by media freedom organisations who petitioned the Ombudsperson, Mozambique [revoked](#) Executive Decree 40/2018 in May 2020, which [set](#) exorbitant fees for the registration, licensing and renewal of licences for media outlets and high fees for the accreditation of local and foreign journalists.

In South Korea, restrictive amendments to the media law were [shelved](#) following opposition from civil society and media groups.

9. **Do you see any major gaps in the international human rights legal framework? Are there any specific recommendations that you would suggest to address such gaps or to improve implementation of existing standards?**
10. **The Special Rapporteur would welcome examples of good practice by Governments, companies, the media sector, civil society and other stakeholders, and your recommendations on how best to address the challenges and threats to press/media freedom, independence, diversity, pluralism, and safety of journalists. Please share any relevant documents, reports, news or academic articles that you believe should be considered in the preparation of her report.**

Media companies

In [Myanmar](#), on 8 December 2021, Facebook stated that it would [ban companies](#) linked to Myanmar's military from operating on its platform, just hours after lawyers filed a class action lawsuit against the company on behalf of Rohingya refugees. The page of telecoms operator Mytel, part owned by the military, was among those removed. The social media giant said that the move expands an existing ban on military pages.

In [Hong Kong](#), in August 2019, Twitter suspended at least 900 fake accounts and botnets attributed to the Chinese government used to spread disinformation about the protests. These were part of a larger network of 200,000 illegitimate accounts. Google disabled 210 YouTube accounts, and Facebook suspended seven pages, three groups, and five accounts.

In Indonesia, where several forms of censorship have been carried out by the government on social media, investigation by [Facebook](#) found inauthentic coordinated behavior, prompting the social media platform to remove 69 accounts and 42 pages. Moreover, it



found that InsightID, a Jakarta-based PR Agency, spent US\$300,000 in paid ads targeting European audiences. They used fake accounts to manage the pages.

In the Philippines, Facebook has been weaponised by President Duterte and used as a digital square hosting “a never-ending meme-driven propaganda campaign that’s easier to share and harder to police.” Facebook, however, has since become more responsive to complaints about the proliferation of accounts that display what it classifies as coordinated inauthentic behavior.

Civil Society

Disinformation campaigns jeopardise the freedom, independence, pluralism and diversity of media, as well as, the safety of journalists.

For this reason, in February 2020, the Women’s Media Centre of Cambodia (WMC) launched its own information verification website called Crosscheck WMC, the first information authentication site in Cambodia.

In Hong-Kong, AFP and other media organizations have adopted a strategy of working together to pool resources and bolster each other’s credibility, or working with social media companies such as Facebook to counter disinformation from the Chinese government and guarantee a free and independent information.