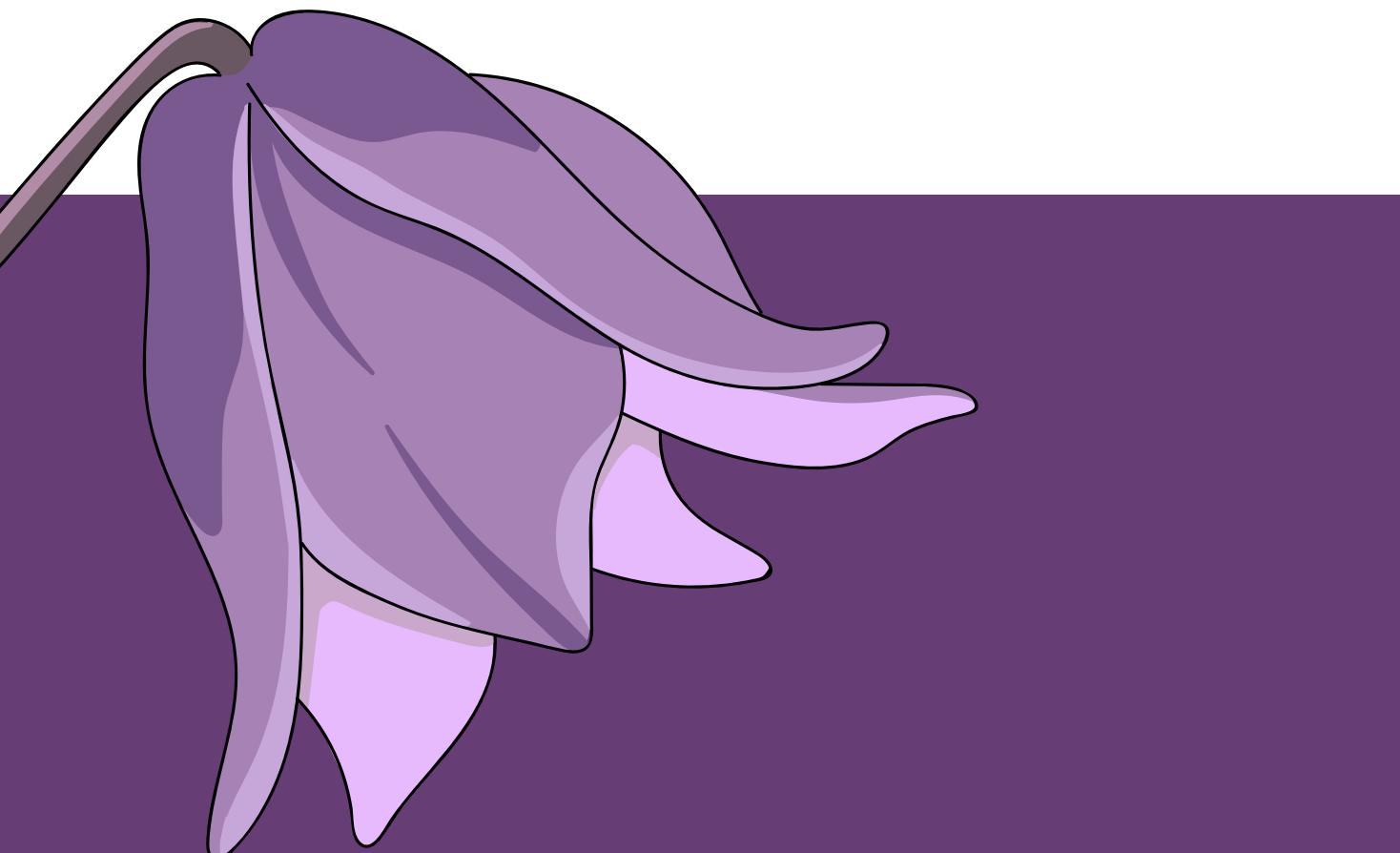


Those Unspoken Thoughts

A study of censorship and media freedom in Manipur, India



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Open Technology Fund (OTF) Information Controls Fellow

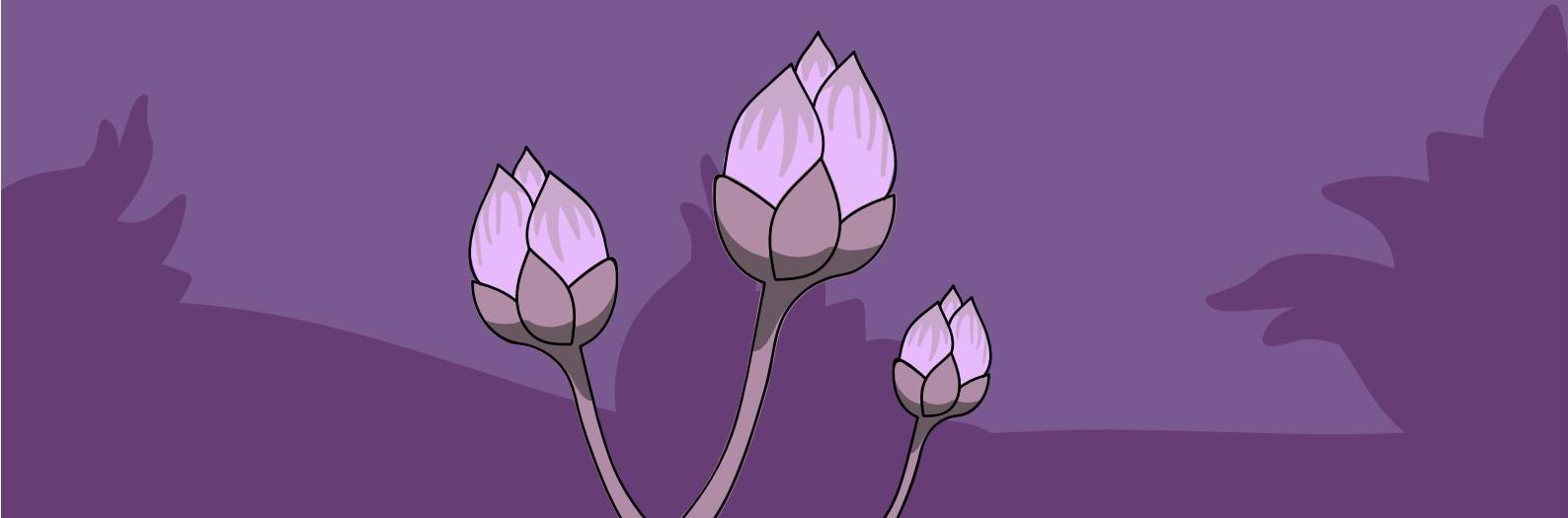
June 2020



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Key Findings

- **Censorship variance on a network-level**

Internet censorship (i.e., blocking of websites) in India varies primarily from ISP to ISP, rather than from region to region.

- **Confirmed blocked blogs, media, and file-sharing sites**

Block pages were detected for 167 URLs in India across five ISPs (including two networks in Manipur). Of these, 84 URLs remain operational and are discussed as part of this study.

- Most blocked URLs include blogs, file-sharing sites, and media websites.

- Some of the blocked blogs were included in a 2006 blocklist issued by the government of India, following the 2006 Mumbai train bombings.

- Many of the blocked blogs and media articles were included in a 2013 blocklist issued by the government of India, in response to the IIPM controversy.

- File-sharing sites were blocked following a 2014 court order.

- Block pages were primarily served for specific articles, rather than blocking access to entire websites.

- Many of these blocked articles covered the 2012 murder of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar and violence against Muslims in Assam.

- Many of these sites now support HTTPS, which means that the blocking of articles on HTTP webpages can easily be circumvented.

- **Manipuri websites accessible across India.** Websites related to Manipur - including local [media websites](#), [human rights websites](#), and [womxn's rights websites](#) - were found accessible throughout the testing period of this study.
- **Internet shutdowns in Manipur.** Manipur experienced at least five shutdowns from 2012 to the time of this report. These shutdowns create inconvenience for the womxn of Manipur who report loss of professional standing and opportunities as a result. Womxn also report facing mental health issues, such as anxiety and restlessness, due to these shutdowns. Those interviewed raised concerns about the need for shutdowns as it remains unclear whether and how they have helped resolve conflict in the state.
- **Freedom of expression threatened.** Manipur's delicate socio-political environment creates multiple avenues through which freedom of expression is threatened. The number and complexity of the threats has created a chilling effect on womxn in the state, who often practice self-censorship to avoid conflict.
- **Offline consequences for online actions.** Certain online activities, such as engagement in socio-political conversations and mobilization for political activism, can lead to offline consequences for womxn in Manipur, often in the form of physical threats.
- **Freedom of the press threatened.** Press freedom in Manipur continues to be threatened via legal action (such as defamation cases), pressure from the political class, restrictions by the government, and intimidation from Underground Groups.

Introduction

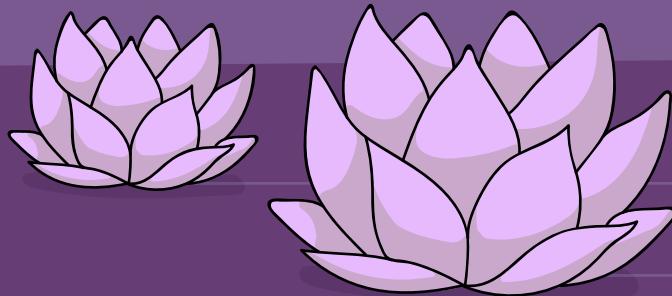
This research report examines the blocking of websites in Manipur, India, and assesses how the use of such information controls in the state compares to that in the rest of the country. In doing so, the report seeks to determine whether censorship — especially on the internet or based on online activities — has an impact on womxn in Manipur (and if so, to what extent). The freedom of the press in Manipur is also generally examined as part of this study in an effort to assess censorship in a holistic and comprehensive manner.

The following research questions are addressed in this report:

1. Which websites are blocked in Manipur?
2. Which censorship techniques did Internet Service Providers (ISPs) use to block access to those websites? Does the blocking of these websites vary across ISPs? If so, how?
3. Does the blocking of websites in Manipur differ as compared to the blocking of websites in other states in India? If so, how?
4. What is the impact of censorship, especially online censorship, on womxn in Manipur? In particular:
 - a. How does censorship impact their identities and freedom of expression?
 - b. How does it impact their livelihood?
 - c. How does it affect their behavior online, if at all?
 - d. How do womxn in Manipur perceive internet censorship?
5. What are the challenges to freedom of the press in Manipur?

This study adopts a mixed-methods research approach to address these questions, using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The blocking of websites in Manipur and across India is examined through OONI Probe testing and an analysis of relevant OONI measurements. The impact of censorship on womxn and freedom of the press in the state is examined through surveys and interviews.

Prior to discussing findings, this report first provides background information regarding Manipur and its legal environment, with a particular focus on internet censorship in the state. The quantitative and qualitative methodologies utilized in the research process are then explained in detail, followed by a discussion of the report's analysis, findings, and conclusions.



Background

Manipur, a state in northeastern India, has been a [conflict area](#) for over 60 years. Although several reports (published by [Human Rights Watch](#), [Amnesty International](#), the [United Nations](#), and [others](#)) have documented human rights violations in the state, more analysis is needed to understand the true effect the state's complex system of violence has on its society.

In particular, few studies or reports provide a comprehensive understanding of the nature and impact of censorship, internet filtering, and internet shutdowns in the region. This report seeks to address this critical gap by providing in-depth research and analysis of these issues.

The research in this study focuses on womxn because their stories are often not included in the documentation of conflict.

In Manipur, Womxn's groups have been leading peacebuilding activities. These have been led by womxn from the Meitei (including the [Meira Paibis](#)), Kuki, Naga, and other communities. Which makes it all the more important to document the impact of censorship on womxn.

This Background section consists of five subsections: Manipur Rule, Internet Shutdowns, Arrests Due to Online Posts, Freedom of the Press, and Legal Environment. These five subsections provide critical context for the research and analysis of the latter sections of the report.

Manipur Rule

Manipur lies in the northeast of India and shares a border with Myanmar. It is considered India's gateway to southeast Asia. The Indian government has declared Manipur to be a "disturbed area" since 1980(A "disturbed area" [is an area notified](#) by the administration to be in such a disturbed or dangerous condition that the use of armed forces in aid of the civil power is necessary). Although

the eight assembly segments of the Imphal Municipal Council are no longer deemed to be "disturbed areas," the rest of the state continues to be so even today. This status was extended as recently as [December 2019](#).

Previously, Manipur was a princely state under the British Empire. When the British left in 1947, Manipur became independent for a brief period of time. The erstwhile ruler Maharaja Bodh Chandra Singh acceded the union subjects to India but [enacted a separate constitution](#) and a legislative body to attain internal sovereignty.

" It was only after the merger agreement in 1949 when the princely state of Manipur became a part of India] that atrocities started. The state became violent and bloody. "

- **Ima Momon**, extract from Mothers of Manipur, Teresa Rehman, Page 35

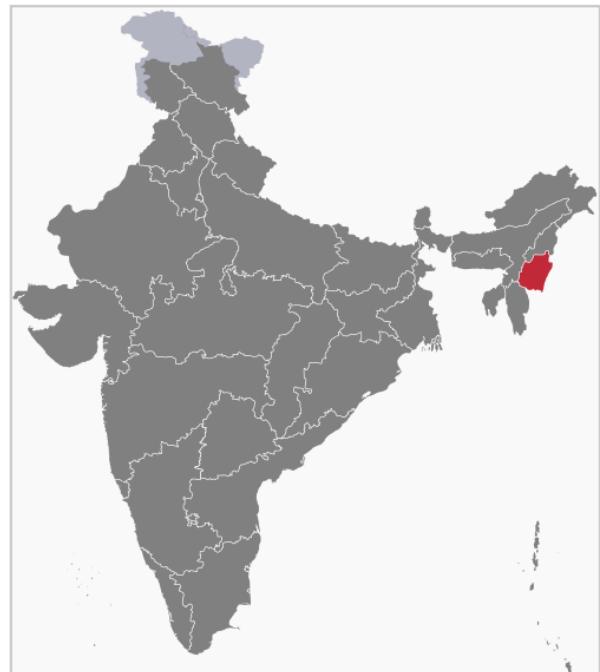


Image 1: *India and Manipur*, by फ़लिप्पो (Filpro), IN-MN, released under CC BY-SA 4.0

In 1949, Manipur was merged into the Republic of India when Maharaja Bodh Chandra Singh [signed](#) a merger document at a meeting at Shillong. The state subsequently witnessed many protests over the following years. Manipur was made into a Union Territory in 1956, and official statehood was granted in 1972.

Under the Punjab Security of State Act 1953, certain parts of the Manipur valley are [declared](#) to be "dangerously disturbed" by the Indian government.

Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA)

On August 18, 1958, the Government of India enacted the [Armed Forces \(Special Powers\) Act](#) (AFSPA or "the Act") as a short-term measure to allow the deployment of the army to counter an armed separatist movement. Initially, the Act was only enforced in the hill districts of Manipur, but by the 1980s it was extended to the entire state.

Even though statehood was granted to Manipur in 1972, the AFSPA is [still enforced](#) in the region. After protests by Meira Paibis at the Kangla Fort in 2004, the AFSPA was [removed](#) from seven Assembly segments in the Imphal Valley. Nonetheless, despite the June 6, 2005, recommendation by the Justice B.P. Jeevan Reddy Review Committee to repeal the AFSPA, the act remains in force over the rest of Manipur.

The AFSPA provides [legal powers](#) for officers of the armed forces to, *inter alia*:

- Arrest without a warrant anyone who has committed cognizable offences, or is reasonably suspected of having done so, and use force if needed for the arrest; and
- Enter and search any premise in order to make such arrests, or to recover any person wrongfully restrained, or seize any arms, ammunition, or explosive substances.

Under this draconian law, Manipur has [witnessed](#) various human rights violations, such as torture, extrajudicial killings, rape, and enforced disappearances. In 2013, the Justice Verma Committee, which examined laws of sexual crimes, found there was an imminent need to [review the continuance of AFSPA and recommended posting a special commissioner](#) for womxn's safety in conflict areas.

Underground Groups (UGs)

" The UGs are everywhere in Manipur, like the very air, like the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA). "

- [Mother, Where is my country?](#)

When the AFSPA was introduced in the northeast in 1958, it was supposed to be used to address the Naga Armed Resistance and the demand for the creation of Nagalim. After the introduction of the Act, however, dozens of underground movements and Underground Groups (UGs) formed (Underground Groups is an umbrella term used to describe armed political resistance and insurgent groups in the region). The Meitei and Kuki groups [formed](#) in the 1960s, mostly to safeguard their particular community interests.

In 2017, the Indian government [recognized](#) the existence of around 40 UGs as insurgent groups.

Over the years, UGs have been involved in illegal tax collection, extortion, kidnapping, and [killings](#). UGs are also thought to be [entangled](#) in the [electoral process](#) in Manipur.

Some of the former groups have even been recruited by the Indian army to fight against other groups, following the Suspension of Operations Agreement in 2008 (see "[Naga Peace Accord and the Kuki and Meitei Insurgencies in Manipur](#)," Sushil Kumar Sharma, January 2016; "Countering the Politics of Fear," Frank van Leirde, Cordaid, 2010, pgs. 137-188).

In recent years, following the rape and murder of Thangjam Manorama Devi, and the delayed justice by the courts, certain valley groups have also been [involved](#) in carrying out "justice" by killing those accused of rape.

Within this tumultuous environment, Manipuri people exist in a state of constant struggle for their lives, livelihoods, and dignity.

Internet Shutdowns

According to the [Internet Shutdowns Tracker](#), India experienced more than 380 internet shutdowns between 2012 and the time of this report. Manipur itself [experienced](#) five internet shutdowns from 2015 to 2019. These five shutdowns are briefly described below.

1. In September 2015, access to the internet was shut down in Manipur following the eruption of [violence in Churachandpur](#). The Kuki groups opposed the demand for the introduction of the Inner Line Permit, leading to violent clashes.
2. In December 2016, the internet was shut down in Manipur from December 18-30, following the call for an [indefinite economic blockade](#) by the UNC (United Naga Council (UNC). This internet shutdown order was [issued](#) by the District Commissioner of Imphal East District.
3. In July 2018, the students and faculty of the Manipur University started a protest demanding the ouster of the Manipur University vice-chancellor A P Pandey. In response to the protests, The Manipur government subsequently [suspended](#) internet services for five days starting on July 19 through via order no.1/1(3)/2008-H for five days after the protests broke out. This was the first internet shutdown in the state after the introduction of the [Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services \(Public Emergency or Public Safety\) Rules, 2017](#).
4. A few months later in 2018, [internet services were once again shut down](#) in the state of Manipur from September 21-26 according pursuant to an order dated September 21, issued by the Special Secretary (home). The government cited the need for [law and order](#) in the state as the reason for the internet shutdown. During this period, Manipur witnessed massive agitations against over the [arrest of eight students](#). Notably, this internet shutdown was then [challenged](#) with a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) by Paojel Chaoba, a senior [Imphal Free Press](#) reporter in the Manipur High Court. This was the first legal case brought against internet shutdowns in Manipur.
5. On February 12, 2019, access to the internet was shut down and Prohibitory orders were issued in Manipur when the [Citizen Amendment Bill, 2016](#) was tabled in the Rajya Sabha. The District Magistrate of Imphal West also [issued an order](#) prohibiting cable TV networks from broadcasting footage of the protests in the state, "inflammatory speeches," or any program which may lead to "breach of peace."

Arrests Due to Online Posts

Arrest of Kishorechandra Wangkhem

On November 19, 2018, Kishorechandra Wangkhem (a journalist with the local channel isTV), posted a video on his Facebook page [criticizing](#) both the state's celebration of Rani Lakshmibai Jayanti and Manipur Chief Minister Biren Singh's remarks about her contribution to the freedom struggle. In doing so, Wangkhem reportedly used abusive words against the Manipur government and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), and also called Chief Minister Singh a "puppet" of India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

On November 26, 2018, Wangkhem was arrested for making these posts under charges of sedition (Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code), and then released on bail. The following day he was rearrested under Section 3(2) of the National Security Act (NSA), 1980. On December 14, 2018, the state government issued an order to detain the journalist under the NSA for one year following the approval of the NSA advisory board. The Manipur High Court [ordered his release](#) in April 2019.

The arrest of Wangkhem was a landmark in the history of censorship in Manipur. Though several people have been arrested in the past under the draconian NSA, his arrest was the first time such an action was taken in Manipur in response a Facebook post (*See "Countering the politics of Fear, Frank van Leirde pg 137-188, publisher Cordaid, 2010" and "Mothers of Manipur, Teresa Rehman, publisher Zubaan Books, 2017"*).

Arrest of Veewon Thokchom

Veewon Thokchom, adviser to the Manipur Students' Union of Delhi, was [arrested in New Delhi](#) on February 15, 2019, under charges of sedition (Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code). He was arrested based on a complaint registered at Lamlai police station (Imphal West) made against his Facebook post criticizing the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016. Little information exists in the public domain regarding what happened to Veewon after his arrest.

Freedom of the Press

A healthy freedom of the press is essential for any democracy. India has around [14,400 registered](#) newspapers and Manipur itself has [many independent media](#) publications, including: [Imphal Free Press](#), [Sangai Express](#), [Poknapham](#), [Sanaleibak](#), [Hueiyen Lanpao](#), [ICHEL Express](#), [Imphal Times](#), [Eimi Times](#), [Chingtam](#), [Kangleipakki Meira](#), [Mannaba](#), [Naharolgi Thoudang](#), [Meeyam](#), [Ningtam Lanpao](#), [Prajatantra](#), and [The Aja Daily](#). By looking at freedom of the press in Manipur, this study aims to examine censorship in the region in a holistic manner, beyond internet censorship.

According to the [Committee to Protect Journalists](#), journalists in Manipur have been "caught between the threat of physical reprisal from militants on one side and government prosecution on the other." Journalists like Valley Rose Hungyo, who runs the Naga newspaper Aja Daily, have spoken about the difficulties of pursuing the profession due to facing suspicion and pressure from both the UGs and the government of India.

Orders from the State

Journalists have received [orders](#) from the government (often at the state level) prohibiting the publishing of specific types of content ([local media houses](#) have spoken about this issue as recently as April 2018). Media houses have also occasionally received directives to not publish content, especially during protests or clashes (*for example, during the iconic protests of Meira Paibis*).

Outlawing the Airing of Meira Paibis in 2004

The iconic images of the womxn's rights group Meira Paibis protesting the rape and murder of Thangjam Manorama Devi by stripping outside the Assam Rifles Headquarters at Kangla Fort and carrying banners reading "Come Indian Army Rape Us" were outlawed after being briefly broadcast on isTV. The protest led to indefinite curfews in Imphal East and West districts starting on July 15, 2004. The Deputy Commissioner of Imphal West issued orders under Section 19 of the Cable Television Network Regulation Act, 1995, prohibiting all broadcast of the images on isTV (see "*Mothers of Manipur*," *Teresa Rehman, Zubaan Books, 2017*).

Attack on Journalists

In addition to receiving legal threats due to their work, journalists in Manipur also face threats to their life and property. For example, journalists N. A. Lalruhlu and [Thounaojam Brajamani Singh](#) were killed in the state by militant groups, and [Dwijamani Singh](#) was shot by police officials in a protest rally. Several other journalists have also [faced threats and attacks](#) from militant groups, including the literal bombing of the [Lambyanba](#) newspaper offices and [threats to bomb](#) the home of Impact TV's editor-in-chief.

Legal environment

This subsection of the report describes India's legal environment, focusing on freedom of expression and censorship.

Freedom of expression

When it comes to freedom of expression, most laws that apply to the Republic of India also apply to the state of Manipur.

In the Manipur [Constitution](#) (set up by Maharaja Bodh Chandra Singh in 1947), the people of Manipur were guaranteed freedom of thought and expression ("There shall be guaranteed to all people justice, social, economic and political; equality of status, of opportunity and before the law; freedom of thought, expression of belief, faith, worship, vocation, association, and action, subject to law and public morality"). However, when Manipur merged into India in 1949, the government of India did not recognize the Manipur Constitution and thus the [Constitution of India](#) came into force in the state.

Under the constitution of India, all Indian citizens are guaranteed the right to freedom of speech and expression.

Article 19(1)(a) – Freedom of Speech and Expression

"19(1)(a) guarantees that all the citizens have the right to freedom of speech and expression. This right is available only to the citizens of India and not available to any person who is not a citizen of India."

The freedom of speech under Article 19(1)(a) of the Indian Constitution includes the right to express oneself through any medium, such as in words of writing, printing, gesture, etc. The freedoms provided for in Article 19(1)(a), however, come with restrictions in [Article 19\(2\)](#).

Right to criticize

The right to criticize is not explicitly stated in Article 19(1)(a) of the Indian Constitution. The Supreme Court of India, in the 1962 case of [Kedar Nath Singh v. The State of Bihar](#), held that mere criticism of the government is not sedition—unless this criticism leads to incitement of violence or breach of public order.

Online Censorship

Section 69A(1), Information Technology Act, 2000

Section 69 of the Information Technology Act 2000 [provides](#) the power to issue directions for blocking public access of any information through any computer resource. This Act has been [used](#) for blocking content that “*threatens the security of the State*”.

Internet Shutdowns

Section 144, Code Of Criminal Procedure, 1973

Up until 2017, all internet shutdowns were carried out under Section [144 in the Code Of Criminal Procedure, 1973](#). Section 144 was previously used to prevent or disperse unlawful assemblies in times of public unrest or violence. The internet was the [first communication medium](#) to be brought under the purview of this Section.

Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services (Public Emergency or Public Safety) Rules 2017

[These Rules](#) were introduced in 2017 under Section 7 of the [Indian Telegraph Act 1885](#). This was the first attempt to create rules to allow for the state and the central government executive to suspend telecom services.

Other laws

As discussed later in this report, the six laws below have also been used in Manipur to permit censorship and restrict freedom of speech and expression. Some of these laws are preventive in nature and contain overbroad definitions.

National Security Act, 1980

This Act was introduced to support preventive detention in certain cases and matters. Under [the Act](#), a person can be detained without charges (preventive or administrative detention) for a period of up to one year.

Section 124A (sedition), Indian Penal Code, 1860

[This section](#) of the Penal Code deals with “*speech or expression which brings or attempts to bring into hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards the Government*”.

Section 144, The Code Of Criminal Procedure, 1973

[This section](#) of the Code of Criminal Procedure falls under the category “preventive

jurisdiction," which extends to cases of nuisance or apprehended danger that need prompt and urgent action. The section can be used to "*direct any person to abstain from a certain act or to take certain order with respect to certain property in his possession or under his management.*" This provision has been used extensively to prevent or disperse unlawful assemblies. The orders passed under this section may remain in force for a short duration up to two months, and may be extended by the state government for up to six months in exceptional cases.

Code of Criminal Procedure (Manipur Amendment) Act, 1983

The Code of Criminal Procedure specifies the procedure for the administration of criminal law in India. The Code of Criminal Procedure (Manipur Amendment) Act, 1983 includes several modifications applicable only to the state of Manipur. These modifications include: (a) extending the period of time for police investigations (and thereby extending the time allotted for administrative detentions), (b) providing more impunity to law enforcement officials, and (c) increasing the requirements for bail applications.

Section 499 (Defamation) and Section 500 (Defamation), Indian Penal Code, 1860

Section 499 of the Penal Code deals with defamatory civil wrongs where the accused may have to pay damages, if the case against them is proven. This section has some exceptions such as the "imputation of truth," which is required for the "public good." Section 500, on the other hand, deals with criminal offences by defamation.

Prevention of Seditious Meetings Act, 1911

This Act provides the judiciary and legislative the power to prohibit public meetings and delivery of speeches in public spaces on any subject that is likely to cause a disturbance. Declarations under this Act shall not be in force for more than six months, but nothing prevents the state government "*from making any further notifications in respect of the same area from time to time.*"



Methodology

The methodology of this study includes a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods. This mixed methods approach involves the collection of qualitative data through interviews, as well as the collection of quantitative data through network measurement. These two research approaches are discussed below, after which general limitations to the study as a whole are examined.

Qualitative methods

The qualitative methods adopted as part of this study involved a survey on internet usage, interviews with womxn in Manipur, and reviewing and updating the Citizen Lab's [test list for India](#).

Survey

[Snowball sampling](#) was used as the primary methodology for the research of this report. The initial research stages involved the creation of a survey questionnaire. The survey questionnaire was distributed via copies printed on paper through various networks of womxn's communities in Manipur. A total of **109 individuals responded** to the survey. The majority of respondents (67%) self-identified as women, female, transgender and transwomen, while 33% self-identified as men.

The printed questionnaire explained the purpose of the survey and provided respondents with an option to not have their information disclosed if they were uncomfortable doing so. The questionnaire itself contained no fields or questions that required respondents to give personally identifiable information collected, except one question that requested contact information in case a respondent was interested in participating in an interview for the study.

The questions inquired into various aspects of internet usage and censorship experience.

The survey is attached to this report in [Annex A](#).

Interviews

In-person interviews were carried out with **30 womxn** in the region to examine the potential impact of internet censorship on womxn in Manipur.

Seven members of the press — which included men from the region — were interviewed to examine freedom of the press in Manipur.

Three womxn served as common respondents to both these enquiries.

Interviewees were selected from the survey respondents based on the following:

- Responses to the survey
- Evaluation and recommendations from local intermediaries

Womxn from various backgrounds were included as interviewees and conscious attempts were made to include representation from both the valley and the hill districts of the region. Efforts were also made to ensure there was adequate representation from Meitei, Meitei Pangal, Kuki and Naga communities. The age of interviewees ranged from 25 to 80 years old. The interviewees identified their occupations as Social Worker, Activist, Business Owner, Editor, Self-Employed, Weaver, IT trainer, and Student.

For security reasons, the interview data has been anonymized, and information about the identities of the interview participants will not be disclosed.

The complete set of interview questions is attached to this report in Annex B.

Indian test list review

The [Citizen Lab](#) hosts a [GitHub repository](#) that consists of multiple [test lists](#): machine-readable CSV files that include URLs meant to be measured for internet censorship.

Censorship measurement projects like the [Open Observatory of Network Interference \(OONI\)](#) rely on a global community of volunteers who run censorship measurement tests from local vantage points. Due to bandwidth constraints, testing all or most of the websites on the internet is neither practical nor possible in most cases. OONI therefore relies on the [Citizen Lab test lists](#), which include a selection of websites that community members consider interesting and/or relevant to test, to conduct measurement tests.

There are two types of test lists:

- **Global:** Includes internationally relevant websites (such as facebook.com), most of which are in English;
- **Country-specific:** Includes websites that are only relevant to a specific country (such as Indian media websites), many of which are in local languages.

To maximize the breadth of coverage and reduce research bias, test lists are meant to include a diverse set of URLs that may fall under [30 different categories](#). The [OONI Probe](#) apps are

configured to test URLs included in these test lists. Depending on the location of the user, OONI Probe will select the URLs from the test list that pertains to the country in which the user is located. In all countries, OONI Probe also tests the URLs included in the global test list. OONI Probe testing therefore involves the URLs of the global test list, as well as the URLs from the country-specific test list of the user's country.

As explained below, OONI Probe testing was performed as part of this study to examine the blocking of websites in Manipur and across India. While it is possible to customize OONI Probe testing to measure custom lists of URLs, the majority of OONI Probe users in India run the default options—testing the URLs included in the global and [Indian Citizen Lab test lists](#). Because the largest volume of measurements collected from India depends on the URLs included in these test lists, **an essential component of this study involved reviewing and updating the Indian test list.**

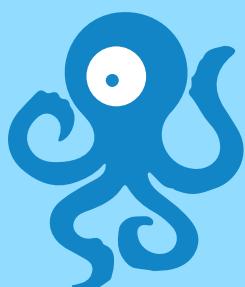
The initial stages of this study involved reviewing all of the URLs that were already included in the [Indian test list](#), and checking to see whether they were still active and relevant. The review also involved evaluating whether the URLs were categorized correctly, and fixing category codes where necessary. In addition to reviewing, removing, and fixing URLs and category codes, the Indian test list review process also involved updating the test list with additional URLs.

The process of identifying new URLs that were interesting and relevant to measure as part of this study was informed by reviewing literature and conducting research. The research questions of this study helped guide the [test list research](#), with a particular focus on identifying URLs relevant to gender rights, human rights, and freedom of expression in Manipur and other states in the northeast of India. Because the goal of this research was to examine whether and how internet censorship impacts womxn in Manipur, an emphasis in the test list research was placed on the human rights organizations, media outlets, and other websites of most relevance to these womxn.

In addition to reviewing and updating the [Indian test list](#), this study also involved the creation of a separate, custom test list that was specifically relevant to the womxn communities in Manipur. This list was tested through custom [OONI Probe](#) testing on the ground.

Quantitative methods

The quantitative methods adopted as part of this study involved [OONI Probe](#) network measurement testing and [OONI data](#) analysis.



OONI Probe testing

The [Open Observatory of Network Interference \(OONI\)](#) is a free software project that aims to increase the transparency of internet censorship (and other forms of network interference) around the world. To this end, the project built a [free and open source software](#)—called [OONI Probe](#)—designed to measure various forms of network interference.

OONI Probe (which is available for [Android](#), [iOS](#), [Windows](#), [macOS](#), and [Linux](#)) includes various network measurement [tests](#) designed to measure:

- Blocking of websites;
- Blocking of instant messaging apps (WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Telegram);
- Blocking of circumvention tools (such as Tor and Psiphon);
- Network tampering through the presence of middleboxes;
- Network speed and performance; and
- Video-streaming performance.

As soon as an OONI Probe user runs a test, the network measurement data from that test is instantly sent to OONI servers where it is automatically [processed](#) and [published](#) in near real-time.

OONI Probe testing was carried out in India between January 1, 2019, and January 1, 2020 as part of this study. A Linux device placed in Bangalore was set up with the Python version of OONI Probe that was configured to automatically run all OONI Probe tests every day. This OONI Probe installation enabled the consistent collection of measurements from a stable vantage point throughout the course of this study, providing a baseline with which to compare measurements collected from Manipur. Similarly, another Linux device was set up with an OONI Probe installation configured to perform automatic daily testing in a northeastern state of India.

Because work on this study potentially posed security risks for those involved, travel to Manipur was limited to specific occasions during which OONI Probe tests were run in the state. It was not possible to set up a stable OONI Probe installation for automatic daily testing in Manipur, as this would have posed an additional risk to research participants and contacts.

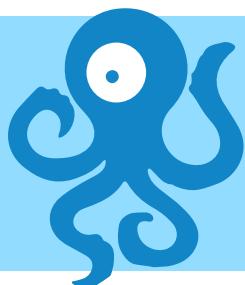
[Web Connectivity](#) was the main OONI Probe test run as part of this study. The test is designed to measure the DNS, HTTP, and TCP/IP blocking of websites by attempting to perform a DNS lookup, HTTP GET request, and TCP connect over the local vantage point of the user, as well as through a control vantage point.

The results from both networks are automatically compared as part of the Web Connectivity test. If they match, the result is treated as lacking any signs of network interference. If the results differ, the measurement is flagged as “anomalous.” The type of anomaly depends on the technique that failed. For example, if the DNS lookup resolves different IPs, the anomaly is categorized as a “DNS anomaly.” If the TCP connection fails, the anomaly is categorized as a “TCP anomaly.” There are two types of possible HTTP failures among the anomalous results: “HTTP-failure” and “HTTP-diff,” where the latter signals the potential presence of a block page. Based on the Web Connectivity test methodology, the blocking of a website is only automatically confirmed if a block page is detected. However, this requires that OONI developers add the fingerprints of specific block pages to the OONI database, enabling the automatic detection and confirmation of blocking when block pages are served for other sites as well.

Because this study sought to examine the potential impact of internet censorship on womxn in Manipur, most of the OONI Probe testing focused on measuring websites of relevance to those communities. Other than the [Web Connectivity test](#) (which was the primary OONI Probe test run as part of this study), all other OONI Probe tests were run as part of the Linux OONI Probe installations (that performed automatic daily testing) located in Bangalore and a certain northeastern state of India that was not Manipur.

Travels to Manipur involved on-the-ground OONI Probe testing of custom test lists (including testing of sites included in the Citizen Lab [global](#) and [Indian test lists](#)), as well as the OONI Probe [WhatsApp](#), [Facebook Messenger](#), and [Telegram](#) test (in an attempt to monitor the accessibility of popular social media apps in the region). The latter tests are designed to measure the reachability of the WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, and Telegram apps through DNS lookups, HTTP requests, and by attempting to perform connections to their endpoints. For these tests, local on-the-ground testing in Manipur was performed on multiple ISPs through the use of SIM cards and local WiFi networks.

The study sought to examine whether and to what extent internet censorship differed across regions and networks by collecting OONI measurements from different regions of India (Manipur, Bangalore, and other states in the northeast of India) and on different ISPs. In doing so, this study worked to assess whether different websites were blocked across regions, and if so, whether and how the blocking affected the lives of womxn in Manipur.



OONI data analysis

The OONI [Web Connectivity](#) measurements collected for this study from Manipur, Bangalore, and other states in northeast India were analyzed to determine which websites were blocked across India.

As soon as an [OONI Probe](#) user submits a measurement to OONI servers (which is the default option), that measurement is automatically analyzed by the [OONI data processing pipeline](#) before it is openly published on [OONI Explorer](#) and on the [OONI API](#). If the fingerprints of block pages that are part of the measurements in question have been added to the OONI database, the OONI pipeline can automatically detect and confirm the blocking of those specific websites. These [confirmed cases](#) of internet censorship are then automatically presented on OONI Explorer.

In all other cases, the confirmation of internet censorship is not automatic and instead requires analysis and interpretation of measurements over a longer period of time. If a block page is not served—or if a block page is served, but its fingerprint has not been added to the OONI database—the OONI data processing pipeline will flag Web Connectivity measurements as “anomalous” if the results between the vantage point of the user and a control vantage point differ.

[False positives](#), however, may occur for many reasons including transient network failures, unreliable servers, DNS resolution, and the geographic distribution of content. To rule out false positives and confirm censorship events with more evidence, OONI usually analyzes measurements to evaluate whether the same types of anomalies persist over time on the same network for the same testing targets. If that is the case, OONI has more confidence in confirming

censorship events—assuming that the anomalies were not triggered by other factors such as high global failure rates for a site or server-side blocking (which is also evaluated as part of the analysis).

The analysis of this study mainly involved OONI [Web Connectivity](#) measurements collected from Bangalore, Manipur, and other northeastern states of India between January 1, 2019, and January 1, 2020. Because most of the on-the-ground testing in Manipur was performed between April 9, 2019, and July 18, 2019, most of the analysis was limited to this time period to allow for comparison of measurements collected from Manipur and other states of India.

Many [block pages](#) were detected as part of the analysis, allowing for the automatic confirmation of censorship events. By also examining measurements that presented anomalies, the analysis involved the *manual confirmation of many other block pages* whose fingerprints were not already included in the OONI database. Measurements that did not present block pages—and which may include false positives—were excluded from this analysis.

Limitation

This study presents several limitations.

The first limitation is associated with the testing period, as well as the volume and type of measurements collected for this study. The overall analysis of this study includes OONI measurements collected between January 1, 2019, and January 1, 2020. The analysis, however, primarily included the measurements collected from specific operators in Manipur and other regions of India (northeast states and Bangalore) between April 9, 2019, and July 18, 2019, when most of the on-the-ground testing was performed in Manipur. Censorship events that may have occurred before and/or after the analysis period, or which may have been captured by other OONI Probe users in India, are therefore not examined as part of this study.

Another limitation is associated with the measurement coverage. While daily measurements from all OONI Probe tests were automatically collected from stable vantage points in Bangalore and northeast India, it was not possible to acquire stable measurement coverage from Manipur due to security concerns. This unequal measurement coverage across regions and networks of India limits the ability to fully compare potential censorship events.

Furthermore, the amount and types of URLs that were measured for censorship also present a limitation to this study. OONI's [Web Connectivity test](#) was run to test the blocking of URLs included in the Citizen Lab's [global](#) test list, the [Indian test list](#), and the URLs included in the custom test list produced for this study. The bias associated with the selection of these URLs is acknowledged, as well as the fact that these test lists may potentially exclude URLs which are blocked in India.

Finally, because the methodology used for this study was [snowball sampling](#), there may have been bias in the selection of the womxn who participated in interviews (it is possible that only those womxn who are part of certain social and professional networks were interviewed). Nonetheless, care was taken to work with organizations belonging to different communities and regions to reach as many womxn as possible. This was done with an understanding of the politics and sensibilities in the region. Womxn from some very sensitive regions could not be included in this study, as it would have posed a security risk to them.

Findings

The research conducted for this report confirmed the blocking of 167 URLs in India, for which block pages were served by Indian ISPs as part of [OONI Probe](#) testing. Notably, however, roughly half of these blocked domains are no longer operational.

This study presents 84 of these blocked URLs, most of which remain operational. The blocked URLs largely comprise media websites, blogs, and file-sharing sites. Websites that are more relevant to Manipur and Manipuri womxn (such as local [media websites](#), [human rights websites](#), and [womxn's rights websites](#)) were accessible in Manipur and across India throughout the testing period (most measurements were collected between April 9, 2019, and July 18, 2019).

Variance in blocking was mainly observed across networks, rather than regions of India. The only observed regional differences in censorship were when ISPs that only operate in Manipur (Malang and Soibam) blocked sites that were not also blocked by operators in Bangalore and other states of India throughout the testing period. The five subsections below (Blocked Websites, Encountering Blocked Websites, Internet Shutdowns, Freedom of Expression, and Recent Developments) delve into more detail regarding the blocking of websites across networks in India, as observed through the analysis of [OONI measurements](#).

Blocked websites



Image 2: Screenshot of a blocked website paktimes.com

Through an analysis of [OONI measurements collected from India](#) from January 1, 2019, to January 1, 2020, this study confirmed the [blocking of 167 domains](#) in India. Blocked domains which have expired, been parked, squatted on, or are otherwise no longer operational have been removed

from the findings presented below. This study therefore presents findings from **84 blocked URLs** (see Annex C), which are operational (with a few exceptions for non-operational domains that are particularly noteworthy to discuss).

The blocking of these websites was confirmed because operators served [block pages](#) when these sites were tested through the use of [OONI Probe](#). Some of the block pages were automatically detected because their fingerprints were already present in the OONI database. The remaining block pages were detected through manual analysis of measurements that presented anomalies and signaled the potential presence of blocking.

Notably, variances in blocking were not observed by region, but rather on a network level. In other words, website blocking differed from one ISP to another, rather than from region to region within the country. Tests were, however, run on two networks that only operate in Manipur: Malang (AS135831) and Soibam (AS133300). Therefore, the variance in blocking between these two networks and the other three networks that were tested across India (AS9829, AS45609, AS38266) reveal that some instances of internet censorship do differ across regions.

Throughout the testing period, measurements were collected from multiple [ASNs](#) (Autonomous System Numbers), but this study presents findings from the following 5 ISPs:

- **Malang (AS135831)** Local ISP in Manipur
- **Soibam (AS133300)** Local ISP in Manipur
- **BSNL (AS9829)**
- **Bharti Airtel (AS45609)**
- **Vodafone India (AS38266)**

The first two ISPs listed above operate in Manipur, while the rest operate nationally throughout India as well as in Manipur. These five ASNs were selected for the presentation of findings due to two primary reasons:

- *They allow for comparison of internet censorship between Manipur and the rest of India.* BSNL is a corporate telecom service provider (TSP) owned by the Government of India, while Airtel and Vodafone are privately-owned TSPs.
- *They allow for the most accurate analysis and comparison.* From April 9, 2019, to July 18, 2019 (when most measurements were collected from Manipur), the largest volume of consistent measurements was collected from these networks.

The 84 blocked websites presented in this study fall under the following eight categories: news media, blogs, file-sharing, human rights, religion, culture, military, and other (including online dating, hate speech, and forums).

The vast majority of blocked domains were blogs, file-sharing sites, and media websites. The following subsections share findings from each category.

News Media

The analysis of [OONI measurements](#) collected from Manipur and Bangalore between January 1, 2019, and January 1, 2020, revealed the blocking of 17 news media websites. These websites were blocked by multiple local ISPs that served block pages.

The table below lists the 17 blocked media websites, along with the relevant OONI measurements that show their blocking across ISPs.

Domain	OONI measurements showing blocking
article.wn.com	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=article.wn.com
articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=anomalies&domain=articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com
caravanmagazine.in	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=anomalies&domain=caravanmagazine.in
getahead.rediff.com	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=anomalies&domain=getahead.rediff.com
www.abc.net.au	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=anomalies&domain=www.abc.net.au
www.fakingnews.com	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=anomalies&domain=www.fakingnews.com
www.hinduhumanrights.org	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=www.hinduhumanrights.org
www.indianexpress.com	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=anomalies&domain=www.indianexpress.com
www.jafrianews.com	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=www.jafrianews.com
www.nndh.com	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=www.nndh.com
www.telegraph.co.uk	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=anomalies&domain=www.telegraph.co.uk
twocircles.net	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=twocircles.net
www.aljazeera.com	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=www.aljazeera.com
www.timesofummah.com	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=www.timesofummah.com
www.kavkazcenter.com	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=www.kavkazcenter.com
www.pakalertpress.com	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=www.pakalertpress.com
paktimes.com	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=paktimes.com

Table 1: Blocked News Media Sites

Each of the OONI measurement links above provides access to the raw measurement data and reveals how the blocking of specific URLs can vary across networks. When accessed online, the measurements annotated as “confirmed” in these links are those where block pages were automatically detected because their fingerprints were already included in the OONI database. The measurements annotated as “anomalous” are those where block pages were served but identified through manual analysis rather than automatic detection.

The chart below illustrates the variance in blocking across networks for each of the 17 blocked media websites between April 9, 2019, and July 18, 2019. (see *Image 3*).

Blocked Media Websites in India



Image 3: Blocked media websites in India

Each site is compared on two Manipuri networks (Malang and Soibam) and three national networks (BSNL, Bharti Airtel, Vodafone India). The numbers included on the right of each ASN in the chart show the scale of the y axis, demonstrating how many OONI measurements were collected on each network within the testing period. The legends illustrate the different types of

network anomalies detected, while those annotated as “confirmed blocked” are the cases where block pages were served and identified. Many of these media websites were included in a [2013 blocklist](#) issued by the government of India, ordering all ISPs in the country to block access to 78 URLs. Of these URLs, 73 were [reportedly blocked](#) for covering the controversy surrounding the educational institution Indian Institute of Planning and Management (IIPM). The IIPM was [criticized](#) for false advertisements and fraudulent practices, and [accused](#) of misleading its students by claiming to issue University degrees under false pretenses.

India’s [University Grants Commission \(UGC\)](#)—which is responsible for the standards of university education in India—[issued a public notice](#) in 2012 stating they did not recognize the status of the IIPM. The following year, in February 2013, India’s Ministry of Communications and Information Technology subsequently [ordered all ISPs in India to block 73 URLs](#) that contained news and information about the controversy surrounding the IIPM. Interestingly enough, the first URL listed in the blocklist is the [2012 public notice of the UGC](#) (which stated that the UGC does not recognize the status of the IIPM). The other URLs in the blocklist include a wide range of media outlets and blog posts that discuss the IIPM controversy.

Notably, the Ministry’s blocking directive expressly [mentions](#) that ISPs were required to block access only to the specific URLs included in the blocklist. Given that many of the URLs in the blocklist belong to major news outlets (such as [articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com](#), [blogs.wsj.com](#), and [indianexpress.com](#)), blocking access to their entire domains would have carried a higher risk of public backlash. Indian authorities therefore chose to order the targeted blocking of specific web pages instead of censoring these websites as a whole.

Beyond the URLs discussing the IIPM controversy, the [2013 blocklist](#) includes five websites that published orders and judgements issued by Indian courts, such as [high-court.com](#) and [bombayhighcourt.net](#). The IIPM has been [challenged legally](#) over the years, and in 2015, IIPM [shut down](#) all its campuses outside New Delhi. The UGC has continued to challenge the IIPM—recently releasing another [public notice in May 2019](#) stating that the Commission does not recognize the status of the IIPM in New Delhi. The controversy surrounding the IIPM appears to be ongoing, and so does the blocking of URLs discussing it. A court order [reportedly ordered the unblocking of these URLs](#), but recent OONI Probe testing throughout 2019 revealed that the sites remain blocked on most networks in India (see OONI measurement links, above).

Interestingly, many of these blocked media websites now support HTTPS by default, which means most internet users in India likely do not notice the blocking of these URLs. This is because the blocking orders mandate serving block pages over unencrypted (HTTP) connections—not HTTPS. Users can therefore easily circumvent this censorship by accessing the websites over HTTPS for all the sites that support encryption.

The blocked media websites identified in this study were not limited to those included in the [2013 blocklist](#) related to the IIPM controversy. In addition to Indian news websites, this study also confirmed the blocking of several foreign news outlets where although access to entire websites was not blocked, specific HTTP webpages were censored. For example, while the [HTTPS version of Aljazeera is accessible](#) across India, the HTTP versions of several of its webpages were blocked. The [blocking of Aljazeera articles also varies across ISPs](#).

Malang [blocks](#) access to a [2012 Aljazeera article](#) that features pictures of violence in the neighboring state of Assam that left nearly 80 people dead, most of whom were Muslims of Bengali origin. When attempting to access this article, instead of viewing the pictures, internet users on the Malang (AS135831) network view the following block page:

Your requested URL has been blocked as per the directions received from Department of Telecommunications, Government of India. Please contact administrator for more information.

Image 4 : [Block page served by Malang \(AS135831\)](#)

Similarly, Soibam [blocks](#) access to the same Aljazeera article and serves an identical block page. Both ISPs [block access to several other Aljazeera news articles](#) that cover the 2012 violence against Muslims in Assam. But the blocking of Aljazeera news articles that cover violence in northeast India is not limited to Manipuri ISPs. Many other national ISPs, such as [Vodafone India](#), also block access to these articles. Access to these articles has, however been unblocked on at least one network. Seven Star (AS18196), a network that until May 2019 [served block pages](#) for these articles, has since [unblocked](#) access.

OONI measurements revealed several other international news articles have also been censored. A 2012 [news article](#) reporting incidents of Myanmar security forces opening fire on Rohingya Muslims was confirmed to be blocked on several networks, including [Malang \(AS135831\)](#) and [Soibam \(AS133300\)](#) in Manipur, and [BSNL \(AS9829\)](#) and [Vodafone India \(AS38266\)](#) in the rest of India.

A similar [2012 news article published on an Australian media website](#) that discusses the rape and murder of Rohingya Muslims by Myanmar security forces was blocked on [Malang \(AS135831\)](#), [Soibam \(AS133300\)](#), [Vodafone India \(AS38266\)](#), [Bharti Airtel \(AS45609\)](#), and [several other networks](#) in India. A [news article by Britain's The Telegraph](#), discussing the clash between the Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, was censored on multiple networks in India as well, such as [Malang \(AS135831\)](#) and [Soibam \(AS133300\)](#). A [website](#) that once served as a news outlet for the Muslim community, but has since been squatted on and re-purposed, was [confirmed to be blocked on the Seven Star \(AS18196\) network](#). The previously blocked article discussed the murder of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar.

TwoCircles.net (TCN) is a non-profit that publishes news reports from marginalized communities, including Dalits and Indian Muslims. Several ISPs in India—such as [Vodafone India \(AS38266\)](#), [BSNL \(AS9829\)](#), [Bharti Airtel \(AS45609\)](#), [Malang \(AS135831\)](#), and [Soibam \(AS133300\)](#)—blocked access to a [TCN news article](#) that discusses violence against Muslims in Mathura. Jafria News, a [news website](#) of a Shia Muslim religious organization in Pakistan, was also [confirmed to be blocked](#) on multiple networks in India.

The Pakistani media website paktimes.com was [confirmed to be blocked](#) on several networks across India, including [Malang \(AS135831\)](#) and [Soibam \(AS133300\)](#) in Manipur. The website of [Pakalert Press](#), a Pakistani news outlet that is no longer operational, was also [confirmed to be blocked](#) on multiple networks in India. Similar to the instances of blocking discussed above, Indian ISPs [served block pages](#) for a [2012 Pakalert Press news article](#) that discusses the murder of Muslims in Myanmar.

The website nndh.com was also confirmed by OONI measurements to be blocked. Interestingly, the website itself now displays a copy of a directive issued by India's Ministry of Communications and Information Technology on July 13, 2016. The directive states that ISPs are to block 17 websites, including nndh.com, following the 2006 Mumbai train bombings. The notice on nndh.com also lists all of the other websites that were banned in July 2006 and which all ISPs in India were instructed to block following the bombings.

nndh.com For Sale

[Make an offer](#)

In July 2006 this domain was banned by the Indian Ministry of Communication & Information Technology, and all Indian ISPs were instructed to block access.

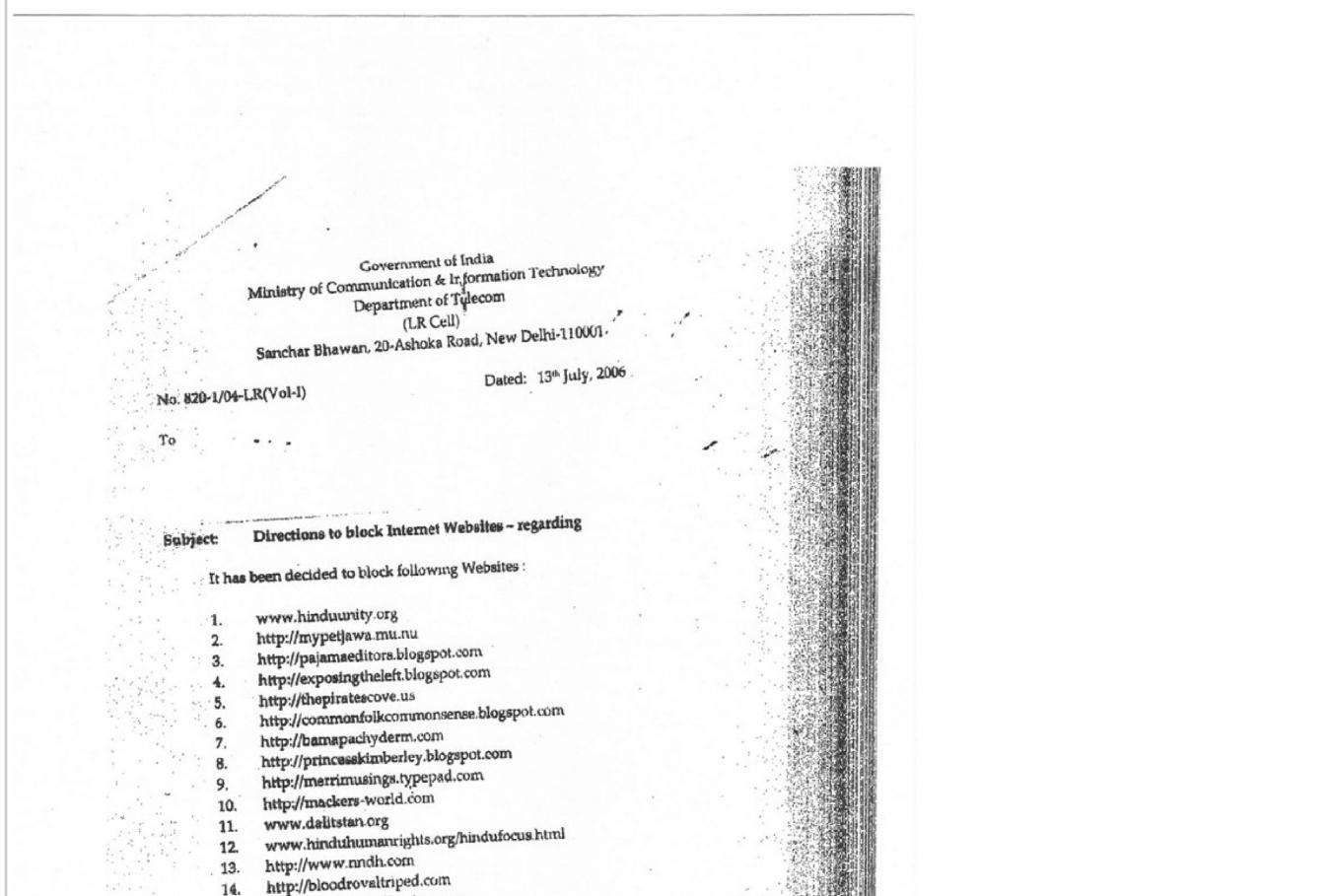


Image 5: Page that appears when accessing <https://nndh.com/> in April 2020

The page on nndh.com also lists all of the websites that were banned in July 2006 and which all ISPs in India were instructed to block, following the 2006 Mumbai train bombings.

As demonstrated above, India's 2006 blocklist also includes the website www.hinduhumanrights.org. Notably, this site has since been re-purposed and the domain now appears to belong to an unrelated media organization (the HHR Media & Network). Despite this, OONI measurements indicated that access to the site remains blocked in India—revealing the Indian government's failure to issue an unblocking order after the alleged need to block access has ended. As Indian researcher Pranesh Prakash noted in a preliminary analysis on a leaked list of the websites blocked from August 2012, "Some of the items they have tried to block do not even exist."

Government of India
Ministry of Communication & Information Technology
Department of Telecom
(LR Cell)
Sanchar Bhawan, 20-Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001

Dated: 13th July, 2006

No: 820-1/04-LR(Vol-I)

To

Subject: Directions to block Internet Websites - regarding

It has been decided to block following Websites :

1. www.hinduunity.org
2. http://mypetjava.mu.nu
3. http://pajamaeditors.blogspot.com
4. http://exposingtheleft.blogspot.com
5. http://thepiratescove.us
6. http://commonfolkcommonsense.blogspot.com
7. http://bamapachyderm.com
8. http://princesskimberley.blogspot.com
9. http://merrimusings.typepad.com
10. http://mackers-world.com
11. www.dalitstan.org
12. www.hinduhumanrights.org/hindufocus.html
13. http://www.nndh.com
14. http://bloodrovaltriped.com
15. http://imageasearch@yahoo.com
16. http://www.imamali8.com
17. http://www.rahulyadav.com

You are accordingly directed to block the above-mentioned websites
immediately and report compliance.

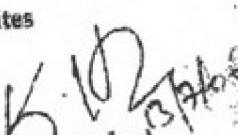

(K. Haridhasan Pavalan)
Asstt. Dir. General (LR-I)
Tel. No: 23036165
Fax: 23359454

Image 6: Order displaying list of blocked sites on nndh.com

The other websites from the 2006 blocklist that were confirmed to be blocked by [OONI Probe](#) testing are discussed in the following subsections.

Blogs

The analysis of [OONI measurements](#) confirmed the blocking of 31 blogs in India. The associated OONI measurements in the table below provide access to raw measurement data, and show how the blocking compares across networks in India over time.

Domains	OONI measurements showing blocking
bdcurma.wordpress.com	https://explorer.oni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=bdcurma.wordpress.com
exposingtheleft.blogspot.com	https://explorer.oni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=anomalies&domain=exposingtheleft.blogspot.com
iipmexposed.blogspot.in	https://explorer.oni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=anomalies&domain=iipmexposed.blogspot.in
harishc.blogspot.in	https://explorer.oni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=anomalies&domain=harishc.blogspot.in
gauravsabnis.blogspot.in	https://explorer.oni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=anomalies&domain=gauravsabnis.blogspot.in
kitabkhana.blogspot.in	https://explorer.oni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=anomalies&domain=kitabkhana.blogspot.in
nanopolitan.blogspot.in	https://explorer.oni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=anomalies&domain=nanopolitan.blogspot.in
ramblingz.blogspot.in	https://explorer.oni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=anomalies&domain=ramblingz.blogspot.in
bharatkalyan97.blogspot.in	https://explorer.oni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=anomalies&domain=bharatkalyan97.blogspot.in
hinduexistence.wordpress.com	https://explorer.oni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=hinduexistence.wordpress.com
janamejayan.wordpress.com	https://explorer.oni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=janamejayan.wordpress.com
pctvbill.blogspot.in	https://explorer.oni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=anomalies&domain=pctvbill.blogspot.in
rogerfacts.blogspot.in	https://explorer.oni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=anomalies&domain=rogerfacts.blogspot.in
sambharmafia.blogspot.in	https://explorer.oni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=sambharmafia.blogspot.in
sierainindia.blogspot.in	https://explorer.oni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=anomalies&domain=sierainindia.blogspot.in
takbeeremusalsal.blogspot.in	https://explorer.oni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=anomalies&domain=takbeeremusalsal.blogspot.in
thepiratescove.us	https://explorer.oni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=thepiratescove.us
vijayknair.blogspot.in	https://explorer.oni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=anomalies&domain=vijayknair.blogspot.in
www.bloggernews.net	https://explorer.oni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=www.bloggernews.net
www.rahulyadav.com	https://explorer.oni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=www.rahulyadav.com
blog.hiddenharmonies.org	https://explorer.oni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=blog.hiddenharmonies.org
youthcurry.blogspot.in	https://explorer.oni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=anomalies&domain=youthcurry.blogspot.in
blogs.tribune.com.pk	https://explorer.oni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=blogs.tribune.com.pk
ganduhotspot.blogspot.com	https://explorer.oni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=anomalies&domain=ganduhotspot.blogspot.com
islampeace1.wordpress.com	https://explorer.oni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=islampeace1.wordpress.com
merhrom.wordpress.com	https://explorer.oni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=merhrom.wordpress.com
mypetjawa.mu.nu	https://explorer.oni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=mypetjawa.mu.nu

pnpaper.blogspot.in	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=anomalies&domain=pnpaper.blogspot.in
takbeeremusalsal.blogspot.com	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=anomalies&domain=takbeeremusalsal.blogspot.com
www.farazahmed.com	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=www.farazahmed.com
javedseo.blogspot.in	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=anomalies&domain=javedseo.blogspot.in

Table 2: Blocked blogs

In the wake of the [2006 Mumbai bombings](#), several of the blogs listed above were included in India's [July 2006 blocklist](#) (such as [exposingtheleft.blogspot.com](#) and [thepiratescove.us](#)). The blocklist included 17 blogs and human rights websites. At the time, it was [reported](#) that [blogpost.com](#) would eventually be unblocked, but the OONI measurements taken for this study revealed that websites like [exposingtheleft.blogspot.com](#) [remain blocked](#) on certain networks.

Other blogs from the table above (such as [iipmexposed.blogspot.in](#), [gauravsabnis.blogspot.in](#), [sierainindia.blogspot.in](#), and [nanopolitan.blogspot.in](#)) were included in [India's 2013 blocklist](#). These sites were blocked for addressing the previously discussed [controversy surrounding the IIPM](#).

Blogs criticizing Narendra Modi (the current Prime Minister of India) or otherwise expressing political criticism were also confirmed to be blocked, including [takbeeremusalsal.blogspot.in](#) and [vijayknair.blogspot.in](#).

Although several of the blocked blogs ([bharatkalyan97.blogspot.in](#), [hinduexistence.wordpress.com](#), [janamejayan.wordpress.com](#), [pctvbill.blogspot.in](#)) are Hindu nationalist pages, at least one of the blocked sites is a blog about Islam ([islampeace1.wordpress.com](#)).

As was the case with blocked news pages, violence against Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar was a censored topic for blogs. OONI measurements conducted for this study confirmed the [blocking of the blog of the Myanmar Ethnic Rohingya Human Rights Organization Malaysia \(MERHROM\)](#), as well as the [blocking of a blog about democracy and human rights](#) in Myanmar.

Blogs about Pakistan were also found to be blocked, including [blogs.tribune.com.pk](#) and a blog by the Awami League covering politics in Pakistan and human rights violations in Bangladesh ([pnpaper.blogspot.in](#)).

As illustrated in the chart below, the blocking of blogs in India varied from network to network.

Blocked Blogs in India





Measure Names
█ Accessible
█ Confirmed Blocked
█ Dns
█ Http-Diff
█ Http-Failure
█ Likely Blocked
█ None
█ Tcp Ip



Image7: Blocked Blogs in India

File-sharing

This study confirmed the blocking of 22 file-sharing websites in India. These include torrent sites, as well as other file-sharing and media-sharing sites. The following table lists these sites and provides the relevant OONI measurements that confirm their blocking in India.

Domain	OONI measurements showing blocking
1337x.to	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=anomalies&domain=1337x.to
a2ztamilsongs.com	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=a2ztamilsongs.com
apniisp.com	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=apniisp.com
chimatamusic.com	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=chimatamusic.com
dishant.com	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=dishant.com
downloadming.com	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=downloadming.com
filefreak.com	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=anomalies&domain=filefreak.com
funmaza.com	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=funmaza.com
funsrape.com	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=funsrape.com
musicindiaonline.com	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=musicindiaonline.com
muskurahat.com	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=muskurahat.com
depositfiles.com	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=depositfiles.com
sendspace.com	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=anomalies&domain=sendspace.com
sevanthi.com	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=sevanthi.com

songslover.com	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=anomalies&domain=songslover.com
tamilkey.info	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=tamilkey.info
bollywoodmp4.com	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=bollywoodmp4.com
karachimag.com	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=karachimag.com
mp3.com	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=mp3.com
topupmp3.com	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=topupmp3.com
wapmaza.mobi	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=wapmaza.mobi
www.depositfiles.com	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=www.depositfiles.com

Table 3: Blocked file-sharing sites

During the 2014 FIFA World Cup, and following a complaint by Sony Entertainment, the Delhi High Court [ordered](#) the [blocking of 219 file-sharing and file-hosting websites](#) for actively infringing on copyrights or engaging in piracy (or for enabling copyright infringement/piracy). The 22 websites from the test list that appear in the above table were part of these 219.

Although the variance in blocking across ASNs is illustrated in the chart below, it is generally evident that most ISPs consistently block access to file-sharing sites. Many of the cases were confirmed automatically because the fingerprints of their block pages were already included in the OONI database.

Blocked File Sharing Websites in India

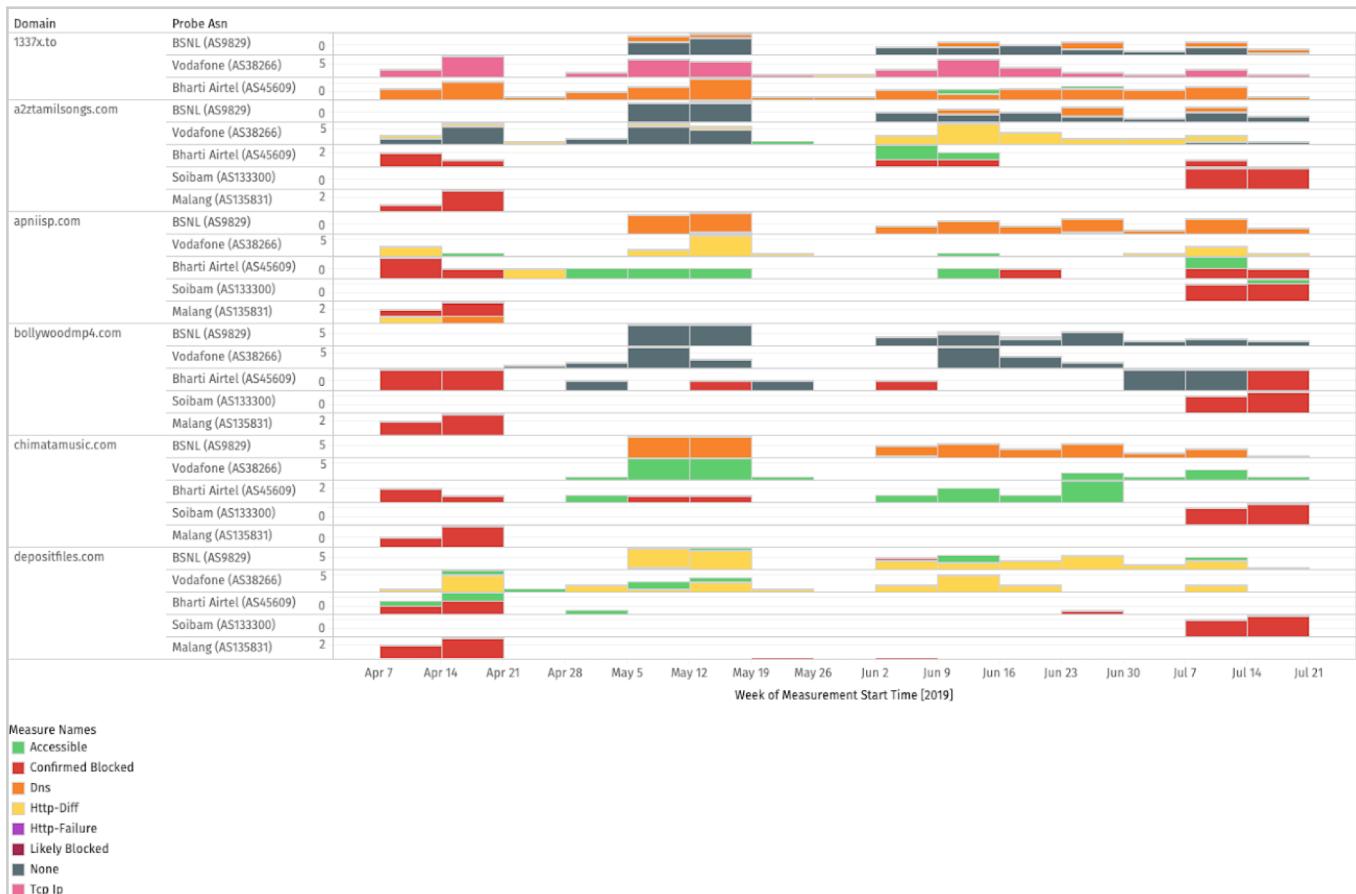




Image 8: Blocked file sharing websites in India

Human Rights

Although news media, blogs, and file-sharing websites make up the vast majority of sites that were confirmed to be blocked, this study did confirm the blocking of several websites related to human rights, religion, culture, the military, and other subjects.

The websites of two human rights organizations were confirmed to be blocked as part of this study. The table below provides their domains along with the relevant OONI measurements.

Domain	OONI measurements showing blocking
dalitstan.org	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&domain=dalitstan.org&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed
www.thepetitionsite.com	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&domain=www.thepetitionsite.com&only=confirmed

Table 4: Blocked human rights organisation websites

Dalits are members of the lowest social group in the Hindu caste system, and have historically been marginalized and discriminated against in India. The term “Dalit” (a name that members of the group gave themselves) means “oppressed” or “broken” in Sanskrit and Hindi.

The Dalitstan Organization is a human rights organization defending the rights of Dalits, one of the most oppressed ethnic groups in the world. Their website, dalitstan.org, was included in India's [July 2006 blocklist](#) after the [Mumbai train bombings](#). OONI measurements taken for this study confirmed the [blocking of dalitstan.org on multiple networks](#) across India.

This study also confirmed the blocking of an [online petition from 2012](#) that sought to raise awareness about the murder of Muslims in Myanmar. The petition provides links to related images that were originally published on islampeace1.files.wordpress.com, a blog that was also [blocked](#) (as discussed in the Blogs subsection of this report). The online petition [remains blocked](#) on multiple networks across India.

The chart below illustrates the variance in blocking across ASNs in India for human rights websites.

Blocked Human Rights Websites

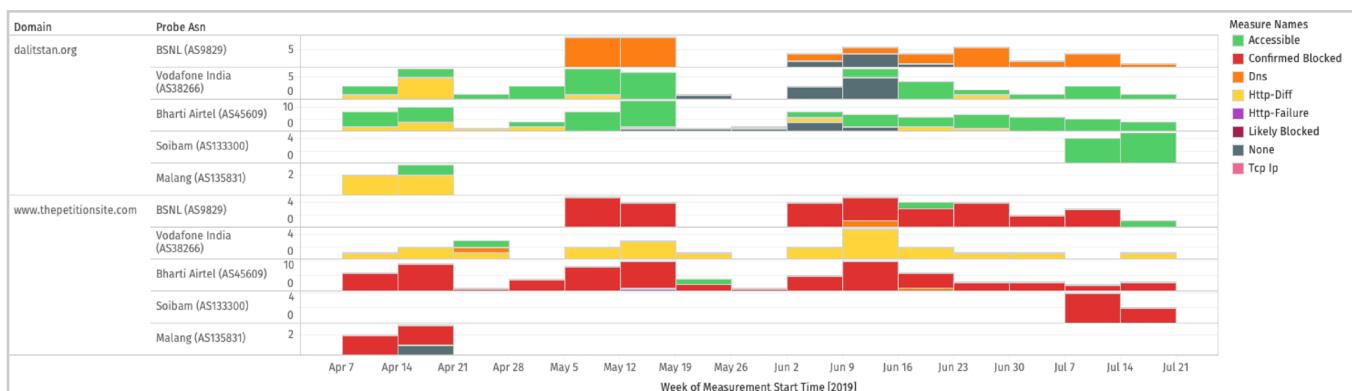


Image9: Blocked Human Rights Websites

Source: [OONI measurements](#)

Religion

In addition to the blocked religious blogs discussed earlier, two other religious websites were also confirmed to be blocked, as demonstrated in the following table.

Domain	OONI measurements showing blocking
www.khilafah.com	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&domain=www.khilafah.com&only=confirmed
www.hindujagruti.org	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&domain=www.hindujagruti.org&only=confirmed

Table 5: Blocked Religious Websites

The chart below illustrates the variance in the blocking of these two websites across ASNs in India.

Blocked Religion Websites

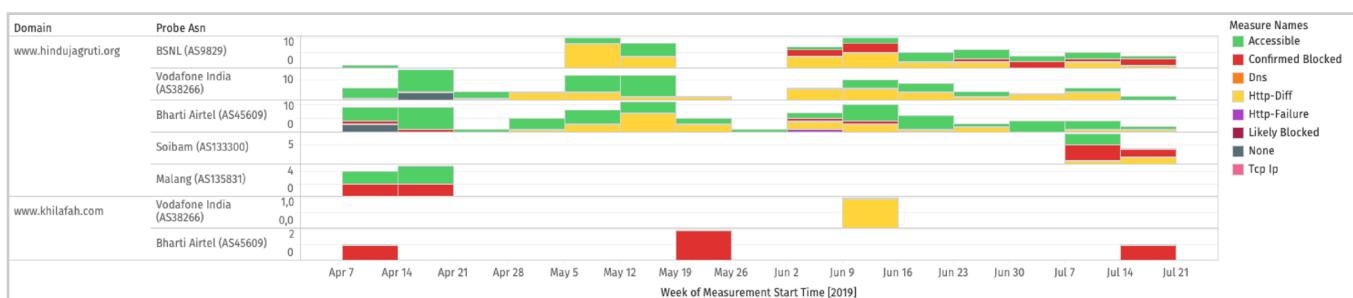


Image 10: Blocked Religious Websites

Source: [OONI measurements](#)

Culture

Three cultural websites were confirmed to be blocked as part of this study, as demonstrated in the following table.

Domain	OONI measurements showing blocking
desijammers.com	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&domain=desijammers.com&only=confirmed
www.mensxp.com	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=www.mensxp.com
kafila.org	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&domain=kafila.org&only=anomalies

Table 6: Blocked Cultural Websites

In the wake of the IIPM controversy, URLs from both kafila.org and mensxp.com (the latter refers to itself as "India's Largest Men's Lifestyle Website") were [included in India's 2013 blocklist](#).

The chart below illustrates the variance in the blocking of these three sites across networks in India (where it is evident that kafila.org is blocked on most of the compared networks).

Blocked Culture Websites



Image 11: Blocked Cultural Websites

Source: [OONI measurements](#)

Military

Pakistan's defense website, along with the site of the Al-Qassam Brigades (the military wing of the Palestinian Hamas organization) were confirmed to be blocked as part of this study, as demonstrated below.

Domain	OONI measurements showing blocking
www.defence.pk	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&domain=www.defence.pk&only=confirmed
www.alqassam.ps	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=anomalies&domain=www.alqassam.ps

Table 7: Blocked Military Websites

The chart below illustrates the variance in the blocking of these two sites across networks in India.

Blocked Military Websites



Image 12: Blocked Military Websites

Source: [OONI measurements](#)

Notably, only one measurement for www.alqassam.ps was collected on each network (which is why the y axis of the above chart shows 1,0).

Other

In addition to the subsections of websites discussed above, several other websites were also confirmed to be blocked as part of this study, as demonstrated in the following table.

Domain	OONI measurements showing blocking
adultfriendfinder.com	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&domain=adultfriendfinder.com&only=confirmed https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=anomalies&domain=www.consumercourtforum.in
www.consumercourtforum.in	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=anomalies&domain=www.consumercourt.in
www.consumercourt.in	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=anomalies&domain=www.zone-h.org
www.zone-h.org	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=www.stormfront.org
www.stormfront.org	https://explorer.ooni.org/search?until=2020-01-01&probe_cc=IN&only=confirmed&domain=www.stormfront.org

Table 8: Other Blocked Websites

Consumercourtforum.in and consumercourt.in were both [included in India's 2013 blocklist](#) after the IIPM controversy. Adultfriendfinder.com may have been blocked as part of India's [pornography ban](#), while stormfront.org (a white pride site that incites hate speech) was likely blocked under hate speech laws.

The chart below illustrates the variance in the blocking of these websites across networks in India.

Other Blocked Websites

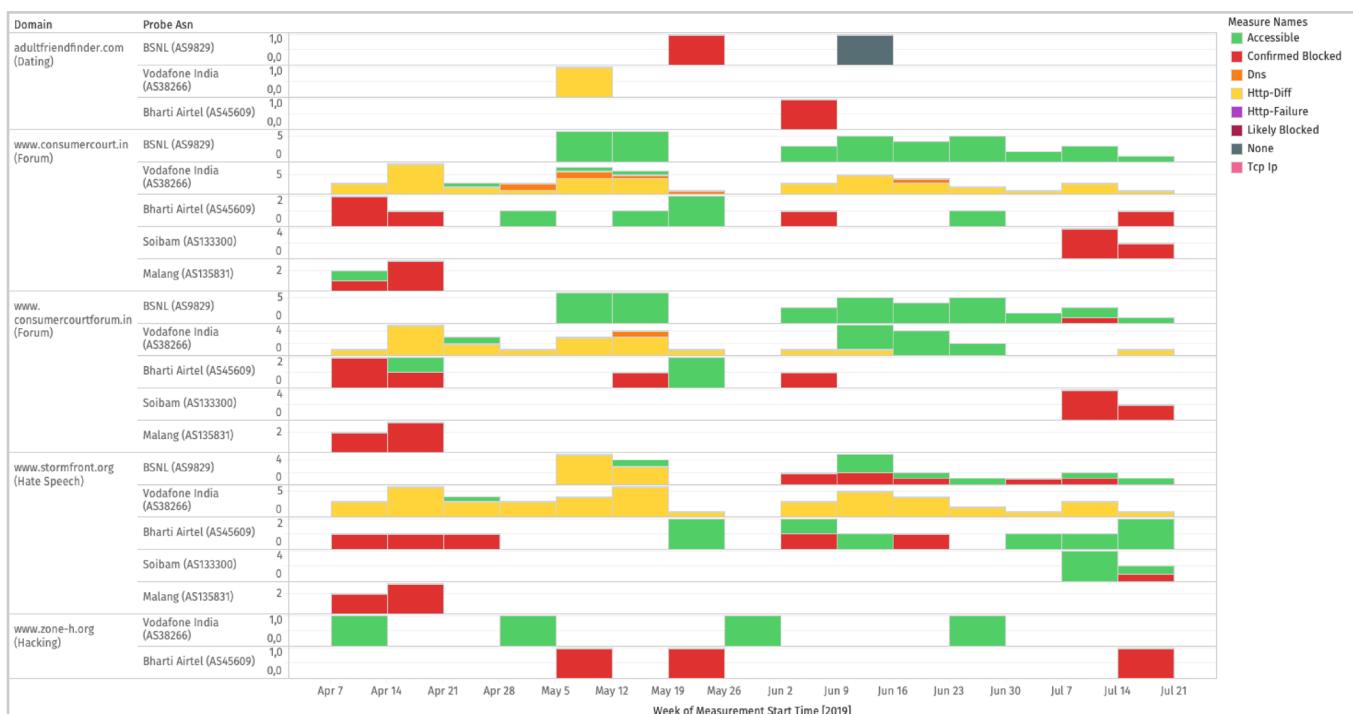


Image 13: Other Blocked Websites

Source: OONI measurements

Encountering blocked websites

In conducting this study, both survey and interview respondents were asked whether they had encountered blocked websites when attempting to access the internet in India.

When asked about which sites were blocked, most respondents did not provide details of specific URLs (only 12 of the 109 survey respondents reported that they had encountered specific blocked websites). Instead, respondents often characterized blocked websites they had encountered by using the following topics: pornography, torrents, gaming, and political criticism. Some survey respondents included text such as "*random sites while searching for certain information.*" One survey respondent reported that a blocked URL they encountered was pornography website xxx.com.

Notably, the limited answers and details provided about blocked websites suggest it is possible that the surveyed group might not fully understand what a blocked website is or what one looks like.

This possibility was reinforced during in-person interviews. One participant responded:

" How do you know that? How can I know that the website is blocked? Sometimes when you open this webpage [I get the response that it is no] longer available. Does that mean the information is taken [down] or my laptop does not allow me to access it? That I am not sure. "

When asked about blocked websites, another interviewee participant responded:

" I don't know whether it is blocked. But I have encountered this website is invalid or no longer available. "

One interviewee respondent mentioned paywalled sites when asked about blocked sites.

" Not really. Except [paywalled] research sites. "

Another interviewee, unsure if they had encountered blocking or an internet shutdown, shared:

" [I encountered] this page is temporarily unavailable or something like that. Due to [a] directive from the government this page has been temporarily blocked or something like that was being displayed. It was all the internet actually. When I tried to [use] Google, it [said] I have no internet. "

When asked about blocked sites, the same interviewee explained they had come across insecure sites:

" [I came across] This page if you open it there are risks involved if you wish to continue you can go ahead. "

These types of interview responses of this study suggest that certain participants in the study had limited knowledge of internet censorship, and found it challenging to distinguish blocked websites from other instances of websites or their inaccessible content being inaccessible.

Knowledge of censorship laws

Study participants had limited knowledge of censorship laws. Although 62% of survey respondents said that they were aware of laws and regulations around internet censorship, nearly 80% of the survey respondents reported not knowing which specific laws in Manipur allow for internet censorship. Roughly 83% of respondents reported that they were not aware of the processes required to block websites or shut down access to the internet.

Of the 20 survey respondents who reported having knowledge around local censorship laws, only five of them mentioned relevant laws. Two respondents mentioned the Information Technology Act, two other respondents referenced privacy laws, and one respondent mentioned the censorship of nudity.

When asked about the legal processes to be followed to block a website, three respondents mentioned Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, another respondent discussed the process followed for internet shutdowns, and another reported, "*The cybercrime department of the state looks after the execution of the law.*" One respondent held the view that "*[i]ndecency, [and] statement against the state*" are bases for censorship.

Knowledge of circumvention strategies

Respondents reported minimal knowledge about censorship circumvention tools and expressed little desire to explore options to circumvent blocks.

Only five participants mentioned the use of VPNs to circumvent the blocking of websites (three of which were men, two were transgender womxn). Three respondents reported that they used the mobile VPNs [SuperVPN](#) and [SoloVPN](#) to circumvent blocking. Others said they did not use a specific VPN.

Eleven survey respondents said they would stop accessing a website if they found it was blocked or otherwise inaccessible. Only seven respondents expressed the desire to seek more information from the government or look for similar websites if they encountered such a blocking. Just one respondent indicated they would ask an expert.

Internet Shutdowns

At least ten interview respondents [mentioned](#) that, in their view, internet shutdowns were enforced in the state whenever there was a crisis.

Conversations around internet shutdowns appear to have become so common in Manipur that several interview participants expressed lighthearted humor when discussing them, noting that there are more people on the streets during a shutdown because there is no internet to keep them home.

" It's like a regular bandh [a form of protest everyday life completely shuts down in the place of its declaration] that you have, If there is an internet ban people move so fast [on the street]. "

The vast majority of survey respondents (94.4%) and interviewees reported having experienced an internet shutdown. Only 5.6% of respondents, and just two interviewees, said they had not experienced a shutdown. The survey was distributed in at least six districts of Manipur, while the interviewees included local residents of Manipur.

Have you ever experienced an internet shutdown?



No (5.6%)

Yes (94.4%)

Image 14: Survey responses to the question, "Have you experienced an internet shutdown?"

The survey for this report was distributed in at least six districts of Manipur, and interviewees included local residents of Manipur. When asked about internet shutdowns in Manipur, the survey respondents referred to the 2015, 2016, 2018, and 2019 internet shutdowns (these shutdowns are all documented in the Software Freedom Law Centre's [Internet Shutdown Tracker](#)).

In addition to these five shutdowns, respondents also reported that internet services were shut down in Manipur during the following occasions:

1. The internet was shut down for a day or two in 2019 during elections and ballot counting.
2. The internet was shut down for two days in November 2019 when [Kishorechandra Wangkhem was arrested](#).
3. Access to the internet was disrupted in September 2019 when Farooq, a Manipuri Muslim, was killed in a [mob lynching incident](#) by the Meitei community.
4. Access to the internet was disrupted on November 30, 2014, when Prime Minister Modi visited Imphal during the Sangai Festival.

Notably, multiple respondents from a single district of Manipur spoke about the internet shutdown on November 30, 2014. No publications, however, were located to corroborate any of these shutdowns.

It is possible that the internet shutdowns the respondents referred to in September and November 2018 (i.e. during the issue of the [mob lynching](#) of 26-year-old Farooq and the [arrest of Kishorechandra Wangkem](#)) were confused with the documented internet shutdowns in September 2018, when the internet was confirmed to be shut down due to the Manipur University protests.

Communication around internet shutdowns

During interviews, participants were asked about how information relating to internet shutdowns was communicated. Most interviewees reported that they were notified of the internet shutdowns through newspapers and TV, rather than from their ISPs. Some respondents said they also received messages on WhatsApp from friends sharing information or news about the impending shutdown.

" [The information of shutdowns] was in the newspaper and TV so we were aware. But ISP did not say anything; suddenly it [internet] went away. We kept trying [to use the internet] and nothing happened. But, of course, you know [in] Manipur news passes very fast. On the local TV news they were announcing the internet will be shutdown and all. They announced that internet will not be available. "

During an interview, one newspaper editor mentioned that the notification of an internet shutdown is sent by the Home Department and that a similar notice is sent to ISPs. Newspaper agencies are notified only after the shutdown is in effect.

" The home department will issue a notice and send it to newspapers and then the network is shut down. Then it is sent to ISPs. We haven't published about it in our newspaper because whenever it comes to us it is too late and so no use to publish. They justify saying it will control people's mass agitation. "

Under the Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services ([Public Emergency or Public Safety\) Rules, 2017](#), the Secretary of the Home Department is currently responsible for providing the order around internet shutdowns. Until 2017, internet shutdowns in Manipur were based on [orders](#) from District Commissioners.

Due to this lack of communication, during the first few internet shutdowns interview respondents said they did know what had happened to their internet connectivity or who was responsible for it.

" The first time I experienced a shutdown I was not aware it was not done by the government. But I just assumed that it was done by unscrupulous people destroying the towers. But it don't seem to be like this. Because nobody has seen the notice. So I thought it was done by some gang. Because there was no notice. "

Ramifications of internet shutdowns

The internet shutdowns in Manipur have had both [personal and professional ramifications](#) for womxn living in the state, who are all affected in different ways and to varying degrees.

Some interviewees said the internet shutdowns did not affect them because their work did not require internet access.

" For me it does not [affect me]. But for others their work also depends on [the] internet so it affects [them]. "

Other interviewees mentioned that they had BSNL broadband connections, which were active during all of the internet shutdowns.

" [The internet shutdown] affects me a lot. But the [BSNL] broadband is still working. I can still work. "

The majority of interviewees reported that the internet shutdowns in Manipur had significant ramifications on womxn and the media, including costs to professional life, feelings of loss and anxiety, loss of professional opportunities, disruption of everyday life, and an effect on the press. These types of ramifications are discussed in the following subsections.

Cost to professional life

Several interviewees mentioned that during the internet shutdowns they could not communicate with their colleagues, which affected their ability to work.

" We could not send email to [the] office. Work was not getting done. "

Shutdowns also created a loss of trust for the womxn at work, as their superiors and organizations began to view them in negative light.

" Very much, because we regularly send the daily log to the head office. If we are not going to work also we have to give the reason because we have internet shutdown. Actually when the internet is completely shut down [I can't send the mail]. And the mail is [too long] so I can't send it on the message [SMS]. Because of this we are not able to connect with the office and it also adds a lot in terms of my pending work and then also sometimes people also don't believe. People in the head office might think it was very frequent. [people think that you did not try harder and you don't want to work]. I [have observed] that kind of [response] from my head office. The trust that was there between me and the senior staff at the head office [was lost]. [Frequent internet shutdowns] just hurts that trust. "

The shutdowns also made communication and coordination of professional events much more difficult.

" We have a WhatsApp group [for mobilization]. We can't arrange a program when there is no internet. When we have a lot of work it affects us. "

Sense of loss and anxiety

Several interviewees shared that that the internet shutdowns created a period of restlessness because they were used to constant communication over the phone, especially on WhatsApp.

According to a 2020 report from the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), the teledensity in the northeast of India is about 84% (this means that the number of people using phones and with internet subscriptions is very high).

Some interviewees reported that the shutdowns also led to increased anxiety and worry due to a lack of communication.

" We don't get information from people and sometimes we are worried. "

Loss of professional opportunities

Although the Manipur government is trying to support entrepreneurship in the state through initiatives like [Startup Manipur](#), internet shutdowns threaten to limit opportunities for businesses to grow businesses or individuals to apply for work.

As an interviewee reported:

“ I lost one project. I lost the deadline and lost the project [as a result of the shutdown]. ”

Disruption in everyday life

The government of India and organizations like the NPCI ([National Payments Corporation of India](#)) are promoting [cashless payments](#).

An interviewee spoke about how she was unable to transfer money due to the lack of internet connectivity during internet shutdowns.

Another noted:

“ If I have to fill forms during exams or transfer money, then it is an issue. ”

Effect on the press

Interviewees from the press [spoke](#) about being unable to publish international and national news due to the lack of network connectivity. They stated, however, that shutdowns did not prevent the publication of local news (even though such news required considerably more effort without internet).

Effectiveness of internet shutdowns

When asked about the justification the authorities provided for instituting internet shutdowns, most interviewees said that the government wanted to enforce law and order in the state and shutting down the internet was a way to prevent the spread of misinformation and hate-inciting speech.

“ There was some crisis in the state.... In trying to prevent the spread of information, wrong information, misinformation and all those things. They had to control that so they did it. ”

Interviewees were asked whether they agreed with the authorities' justifications for internet shutdowns in the region as part of this study. Interestingly, one respondent viewed shutting down the internet as a welcome measure.

“ I think because sharing the pictures [from places of conflict is problematic], and from that people increase the agitation. The mobs [start] gather[ing] and do something or the other. That's why I think they [implement] shutdowns, I think it surely helps [to shut down the internet]. ”

Another respondent felt that unless there is a way to measure the true effect of shutdowns on reducing the spread of violence, it would be hard to provide a concrete statement. They also mentioned that shutting down the internet to prevent communication or sharing was not sufficient, since these conversations could also happen over the phone.

" We don't measure [the impact], we cannot say. We don't have any tool to measure so it is hard to say, but we can still use the telephone. It was just internet [and] SMS that was blocked. "

In general, the majority of the interviewees felt that internet shutdowns are ineffective for four primary reasons:

1. Beyond shutting down the internet, the government does not take other measures like debunking misinformation or providing clarification on the situation. People simply return to the status quo after the internet shutdown order is lifted.

" No they just put curfew and internet shutdown for 2-3 days and they [the government] just started doing the same things. "

2. Shutting down the internet reduces the possibility of fact-checking rumors, which can more easily be accomplished by using of the internet.

" When internet shutdowns there are people, for instance there is one place the problem occurs. So more rumors come up if [the] internet is shut down because the authentic report is not available and which really disconnects people. "

3. Protests in Manipur have been mobilized for many decades before locals had access to the internet. Given this, it is questionable whether internet shutdowns are actually effective in limiting political unrest.

" Shutdown of the internet does not help. From the beginning of the society even when there was no internet or phones. Meira paibis and the student leaders fought for the country. I don't think it will change anything. "

4. Internet shutdowns further anger the protesters.

" No it did not control the agitation. During agitation time people are angry about demanding justice or something. If the government shuts down the internet, it further angers the people. The protesters will do more unwanted things. "

Freedom of Expression

Internet shutdowns in Manipur affect the freedom of expression of those living in the state in various ways. This section of the report addresses this critical issue by examining the views of interviewees regarding social media posts, WhatsApp groups, and freedom of the press.

Social Media Posts

Threats and intimidation

The online activity of Manipuri people, especially that of activists, often leads to threats offline. These threats could be in the form of danger to their lives, livelihoods, and identities. According to interviewees, threats are often received for making political and social posts.

When talking about censorship and the potential consequences of making social media posts, interviewees most often spoke about the Kishore Chandra Wangkhem and Veewon Thokchom who were arrested for the political nature of their posts (discussed above).

One interviewee said that while she personally had not faced any issues, a friend of hers received threats after he criticized a prominent political party on Facebook.

" [A friend] was displeased about the things that are happening [in the state]. He was posting about everything and anything about [name of a certain national political party in India] and other things. Then somebody said, "Hey what are you up to, what do you think of yourself? You will be going to jail because of [your posts]. So be careful". [The person who threatened the friend] must be from the [same political party]... He [The friend] said he got some threatening posts and inbox [messages]. Even in his Facebook comments. So he removed his account. He has a [family] so he [felt] getting into trouble will be a big problem for him. "

When asked how this incident affected her, the interviewee said she was angry and felt that freedom of expression is being restricted in Manipur.

" I was also angry. I said why this friend of mine have to undergo this kind of pressure and remove his account. Because he was very vocal about his comment. I think freedom of expression [was lost]. Is it like [we are having] anarchy or dictatorship in this place. Why are we not allowed to express ourselves? "

Another interviewee mentioned that sharing a video of a personal celebration of a transgender womxn led to offline threats from the Underground Groups (UGs). The respondent expressed that this particular incident was a threat enabled by patriarchal leanings of the society and led to the suppression of rights of womxn, especially transgender womxn. The respondent felt that their identity was used to further suppress their expression online and offline.

" [There] was a birthday party for a transgender women and many of the transgender people went there and it was a local concert and it was a rainy night. Few people who went there danced, they danced [on the] ground where the concert [was happening]. Somebody took the video and put it on Facebook. These crooks [the Underground Groups] they got to know about it and they make [sic] a press statement, that transgender cannot wear female attire from tomorrow. And they were scared. The transgender women were scared. It is all about people having followers and a gun. Anything can happen at any point of time. "

In the past, the UGs have been known to impose bans and diktats on aspects of the Manipuri (especially Meitei) society, including the screening of [Bollywood movies](#) and the [wearing of Indian attire or short skirts by womxn](#). According to these groups, they do this to "uphold Manipuri society values" and prevent "Indianization of Manipur."

The respondent [expressed](#) that this particular incident was a threat enabled by patriarchal leanings of the society and led to the suppression of rights of womxn, especially transgender women. The respondent felt that their identity was used to further suppress their expression online and offline.

Self-Censorship

Several respondents spoke about anticipatory fear and practicing caution with their online posts. The [responses](#) from the interviewees demonstrate that this environment has a chilling effect on free expression online.

" [Regarding] Social media post I am very careful. I read the comments and I want to write, but I don't want to write. I don't want to get myself into some trouble. you know. Because there is a lot of hatred posts within the communities. Which I want to get involved [with] but I don't want to. So I don't dare to. "

Takedown of posts

Several interviewees mentioned that some of their Facebook posts had inexplicably disappeared from their timelines. These posts were not limited to political topics.

" [My] Facebook posts sometimes are taken down. I don't know why [they are] taken down. Especially when [they are] so non-political that it is not hurting anyone. When you thought that posts [were not] anti-national or anti-government. "

" I uploaded one photo [on my Facebook timeline] with one caption only. The caption and photo remained [on my timeline] for three years, after that it said it was not available. It [was] a photo about river pollution. "

On asking if Facebook provided any notification or information on the takedown, the respondents said they did not receive any information. This is contrary to the process that Facebook shared on [internal enforcement guidelines](#) which stated the below:

" If your photo, video or post has been removed because we found that it violates our Community Standards, you will be notified, and given the option to request additional review. "

WhatsApp groups

WhatsApp was by far the most popular communication tool amongst respondents (followed by Line). Of the 109 survey respondents, 105 said they use WhatsApp as a chatting application for personal conversations, and 103 said they used it for work conversations. Despite this widespread use, WhatsApp groups in Manipur have experienced certain forms of censorship. According to a respondent from a minority group, someone close to her was questioned by the police department for sending a WhatsApp message to a group that criticized a religious leader. The individual, who was the administrator of the group, was asked to remove the post.

" It happened with my kin. On one of the religious leaders, my kin and some people had uploaded information [on WhatsApp]. My kin had also shared about it. For that reason, police had come looking for my kin. My kin had written in the group and is the group admin. It was shared by someone else [who was in this group]. "

(This quote has been translated from Manipuri and is not a verbatim translation)

In October 2019, the Secretary of the Chief Minister of Manipur [issued a circular](#) expressing interest to meet with administrators of various social media groups/pages.

Freedom of the press

Some of the websites of the Manipuri press were added to the Citizen Lab's Indian [test list](#) in order to be tested by [OONI Probe](#) users across India. As discussed in the previous sections of this report, the testing found no blocking of these sites.

The interviews carried out as part of this study, however, provide insight into the kind of issues and challenges that the press face in Manipur including defamation suites, information takedown requests, and the feeling of being caught in between the government and the UGs.

Defamation suits

When asked whether they or their peers had experienced any form of censorship, the interviewed media respondents spoke about either facing defamation suits or anticipation of such suits. The journalists considered these suits a type of rite of passage.

" Defamation [lawsuit] is normal for the journalist. There [is a saying that those journalists] who get 3-4 defamation [from a higher ranked person, i.e., VIP person] [are] the best journalist. "

Interviewees mentioned that the defamation law was a commonly used tool against journalists. The majority of the respondents spoke about the experience of [Kishore Chandra Wangkhem](#), while two respondents spoke about a defamation case that was filed by the Chief Minister of Manipur against them. This suit was filed as a consequence of writing an article regarding a poll about the popularity of the Chief Minister.

" We published something [the Chief Minister] did not like so we kept on publishing it the next day. So he filed a defamation suit against us. "

" [The Chief Minister of Manipur] put a criminal defamation case against [us]. That this reporter, this editor and this publisher is humiliating his personality and dignity and all. "

Informal takedown requests

Several interviewees respondents shared that they had received non-legal requests or extra-legal requests or threats to not publish news stories about prominent people.

According to the respondents, some of these requests were made through a WhatsApp group that several newspaper and media editors were a part of.

" We have not published articles like [those that could be considered] defamatory to a prominent person sometimes. Sometimes, from our editors group they call me to not publish an article, particularly because of ministerial complaints. "

The respondents also said that they have received similar informal requests from powerful bureaucrats and politicians. The respondents admitted that this was a very common phenomenon, especially when it came to articles about politicians.

One respondent received a call from an Intelligence Bureau official asking the respondent to not publish a news article pertaining to the kin of a prominent bureaucrat.

Another respondent shared a story about receiving this type of request from a politician and an elected representative.

Every organization had a different approach to dealing with these requests. None of the interviewees said the organization had a formal written policy about takedowns.

One respondent said that they rewrote an article based on these requests.

" I asked our desk editors to rewrite only for the name like a small piece without any details. without naming particular details... "

Another respondent spoke about not modifying the article if they were convinced they had the facts right.

Only one respondent admitted that they took down a comment from their website based on these requests.

" [The] news and the photographs went viral on social media plus my website. There were several comments on it. Some of the comments [were about] the real story of what happened [and] was written by a person who knows him well. Some people came and [they] requested me to take [the] comment down. It was not a threat but [they] requested me to take it down. So I thought it's OK if it is [about a comment] so I just take it down. "

The majority of respondents admitted that they did not have to take down articles from the websites because they were mostly published in print first.

Caught in Between

The difficult geo-political climate of Manipur is a challenge for members of the press who are caught in between facing threats from parties on both sides of an issue. They continue to receive restrictions and directions from the government and threats from UGs about what they publish.

Appeal from the government

An interviewee spoke about receiving an appeal from the government to not publish certain news.

" Sometimes when [UGs] used to give some press releases and other things then the government used to appeal to the newspapers not to publish them, in the interest of this and that. Sometimes, but not often. "

Threats from UGs

Respondents also spoke about facing threats from certain UGs for refusing to publish their press releases.

Every media organization had a different policy to handle such threats. The majority of respondents said they published any news they found to be truthful. One of the respondents said they published rebuttals from the groups as a way to pacify them.

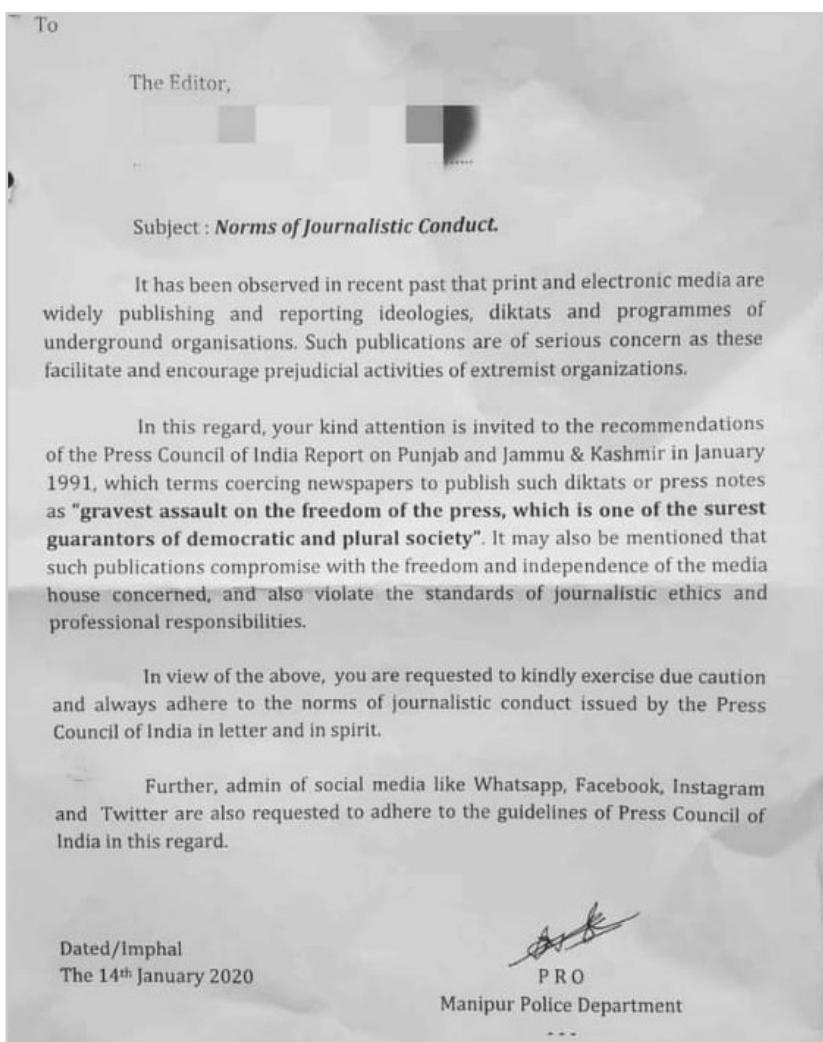
" Sometimes from the underground organisations we publish something and then they are angry. And then they issue their rebuttal. We publish that as well. We publish something the army does not like. Then we recommend them to issue their statement and that's what we publish that [as well]. "

Recent Developments

The censorship activities addressed in this report's surveys and interviews remain ongoing in Manipur, as evidenced by the following recent developments in the region.

In December 2019, vlogger RK Echanthoibi was [arrested](#) in Manipur for her vlogs criticizing Chief Minister N Biren Singh for celebrating the grant of Inner Line Permit system to Manipur. She was charged with defamation, "causing public mischief," and "provoking breach of peace."

A few days later, transgender activist Santa Khurai was reportedly [coerced by the Manipur police](#) into deleting her post criticizing the Chief Minister. She was forced to post an apology after the police visited her home without notice.



On January 14, 2020, the Manipur state police sent a letter to the editors of newspapers to follow "The Norms of Journalistic Conduct."

On March 16, 2020, a prohibitory order under section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure was imposed in certain areas of Manipur's Kamjong District. Mobile internet services [were banned for three days](#) per the order issued by special secretary Home H Gyan Prakash (the ban on mobile internet services was withdrawn on March 17, 2020).



Conclusion

Blocking of websites

The findings of this study show that internet censorship in India, especially the blocking of websites, varies across ISPs, rather than across regions. Different websites were blocked across different ISPs, but the blocking of websites did not vary in regions across India. However, because operators like Malang (AS135831) and Soibam (AS133300) only operate in Manipur, the websites that they blocked sometimes differed in comparison with the sites blocked by other providers (resulting in some regional differences in internet censorship).

This study **confirmed the blocking of 167 URLs in India** during the testing period, 84 of which remain operational. The majority of these blocked URLs were **blogs, file-sharing sites, and media websites**.

Many of the blocked blogs and media websites were included in the [2006](#) and [2013](#) blocklists issued by India's government, ordering all ISPs in India to block access to those sites. The [2006 blocklist](#), released after the [Mumbai train bombings](#), includes human rights organizations' websites, such as [dalitstan.org](#). The [2013 blocklist](#) included multiple blogs and media articles that covered the [IIPM controversy](#). The Delhi High Court also [ordered](#) the blocking of 219 file-sharing sites in 2014 for copyright infringement and piracy. **In most cases that involve the blocking of blogs and media websites, the censorship was targeted at specific articles/web pages published on these websites, rather than the entire domain.**

Beyond the IIPM controversy, many of the other blocked articles discuss the 2012 murder of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar and violence against Muslims in Assam, a northeast state of India. Blocked websites also included [the blog of the Myanmar Ethnic Rohingya Human Rights Organization Malaysia \(MERHROM\)](#), as well as the [blocking of a blog about democracy and human rights](#) in Myanmar.

Notably, block pages were served only for the HTTP webpages of sites—but many of these sites have since added support for HTTPS. This means that internet users in India can likely circumvent the attempted censorship and access these blocked articles over HTTPS in cases where those sites now support HTTPS.

Interestingly, all Manipur-related websites that were tested during this study were accessible. This includes a wide range of Manipuri [media websites](#) and [human rights websites](#), as well as Manipuri [womxn's rights websites](#). This study did not, however, include testing of social media pages of contentious nature. There is likely value in studying the potential censorship in those pages.

Freedom of Press

Members of the Manipuri press have long faced legal impediments and threats to their life and property. They continue to do so. The threats they face now come primarily from influential people and politicians, as well as non-state actors (such as UGs). From time to time, members of the press also face state control and censorship.

Effect on Womxn

Using social media as a means for expression or even sharing creates risk for womxn in Manipur from both state and non-state actors. For doing so, they face a variety of threats such as loss of business, social boycotting, legal action, and death threats. The threats they face are detrimental to their physical and emotional well-being. In case of transgender womxn, these threats also challenge their identities. Some of these threats result in womxn exercising self-censorship. The online harassment and subsequent physical threats womxn face requires further investigation with a focus on social media platforms.

Notably, in addition to being affected by online censorship, womxn are also affected by the censorship experiences of people surrounding them. It is not uncommon for womxn to practice self-censorship based on experiences of their friends and family.

Internet Shutdowns

The Manipuri government has repeatedly turned to internet shutdowns as a tool to allegedly curb the spread of hate and misinformation. Shutdowns often occur during times of protest or clashes between communities. Manipur has experienced [at least five internet](#) shutdowns since 2012.

Internet shutdowns create significant inconveniences and obstacles for the womxn of Manipur. As a result of these shutdowns, womxn reported loss of professional standing and opportunities, as well as increased anxiety and restlessness. In particular, womxn reported that the internet being shut down during times of crisis increases their anxiety due to lack of information.

Despite the government's professed intentions, the majority of interviewees stated that the internet shutdowns in Manipur were not helpful in preventing the spread of misinformation or incitement of violence. Accordingly, the majority of the interviewees felt that the internet shutdowns should not be continued as a way to control crises in Manipur in the future.

Although no direct or transactional censorship was detected in the research, there are many indications of indirect censorship leading to the many unspoken thoughts for the womxn of Manipur.

Acknowledgements

I thank all the iches and itas who participated in this study by providing interviews. I also thank OONI Probe users in India for contributing measurements, as well as the Open Technology Fund (OTF) for supporting this research.

This research would not have been possible without the support of my friends and colleagues at OONI, The Bachchao Project, and other places. My gratitude and thanks for their support and help.

I am grateful for the support and guidance that Nonibala Narengbam, Renu Takhellambam, Mary Beth Senate, and Sangnaidar provided during this study. Their support was the reason I was able to work in such depth on this report.

A research study of this nature needs advice. Thank you Babloo Loitongbam, Nat Kretchun, and Adam Lynn for your valuable advice.

I would like to thank the Manipuri volunteers (who I am unable to name for security reasons) for their hard work and support of the surveys and logistics.

Maria Xynou's support and partnership on this report is something I will always cherish. She kept me motivated to finish this report through my highs and lows. Thank you, Maria.

Every time I write something this long, there is one person I turn to for review and editing. Thank you Rohini Lakshané for being there for me.

I would like to also thank the staff at OTF Learning Lab John Stith and Ergi Shkélzeni from Ura Design for magically making the report better.

Lastly, I thank my partner Liang and my mother Dr. L Swarna Jyothi for all the support they provided and the changes they made in their lives to accommodate me during this period.

Annex A: Survey Form

This survey is being conducted by an independent Indian researcher. Please fill out any questions you feel are relevant and skip any that you do not want to or cannot answer. I understand that some of these questions may be hard to answer. You do not have to share anything that makes you feel uncomfortable and you do not have to go into detail if you don't want to!

What do I plan to do with this information?

My aim with this research is to understand the local information controls landscape and how local communities in the state use technology.

How long do I plan to store this information?

I plan to store this information until the completion of my work. The data collected as part of this survey will be deleted in approximately 1 year from now (by May 2020).

Is this information securely stored?

Yes, the information you share will be stored securely and encrypted. Only 3-4 researchers assisting with this study will have access to the information collected as part of this survey.

1. Age: _____

2. Occupation: _____

3. Gender: _____

— In the following survey, please tick all the choices which could apply.

4. How many mobile phones do you own?

- 1
- 2
- 3 or more
- None

5. Who is your mobile phone manufacturer?

- Samsung
 - Motorola
 - Mi
 - Reliance Jio
 - Intex
 - Nokia
 - Other, please specify:
-

6. Which mobile network do you subscribe internet from?

- Airtel
 - Idea
 - Reliance Jio
 - BSNL
 - Others, please specify:
-

7. Where did you buy your phone from?

- Online Store
- Offline Store

8. What is the operating system of your mobile device?

- Android
- iOS
- Windows
- I don't know

9. Do you have separate laptops or Desktops for work and personal use?

- Yes
- No

10. Who is your laptop/desktop manufacturer?

- HP
 - Apple
 - Dell
 - Intex
 - Samsung
 - Other, please specify:
-

- I don't know
- I don't own a laptop

11. What operating system does your laptop run?

- Windows 8
 - Windows 9
 - Windows XL
 - Mac OS
 - Linux
 - Other, please specify:
-

- I don't know

12. Which chat applications do you use for personal conversations?

- WhatsApp
 - Telegram
 - Signal
 - Line
 - WeChat
 - Other, please specify:
-

13. Which chat applications do you use for work conversations?

- WhatsApp
 - Telegram
 - Line
 - WeChat
 - Facebook Messenger
 - Google Chat / Google Hangout
 - Signal
 - Other, please specify:
-

14. What are the email clients that you use?

- Gmail
 - Yahoo Mail
 - Rediffmail
 - Protonmail
 - Riseup
 - Other, please specify:
-

15. Which software do you use for writing documents?

- Microsoft Office
 - Open Office
 - Google Docs
 - Other, please specify:
-

16. Where do you store your official documents?

- Email
 - Offline Hard Disk
 - Computer Desktop
 - Cloud
 - Other, please specify:
-

17. Which software do you use for storing documents?

- Google Drive
- DropBox

18. How do you transfer files to your colleagues?

- WeTransfer
 - WhatsApp
 - E-mail
 - Rapidshare
 - Other, please specify:
-

19. Which applications do you use for video calls?

- Skype
 - Hangouts
 - WhatsApp
 - Zoom
 - Other, please specify:
-

- None

20. How do you write and store notes on your mobile / laptop from work?

21. Do you know what an anti-virus software is?

- Yes
- No

22. When did you last update your anti-virus software on your mobile?

- Last Month
- Last Year
- Never
- I don't remember
- I don't have an anti-virus application

23. When did you last update your anti-virus software on your laptop/desktop?

- Last Month
- Last Year
- Never
- I don't remember
- I don't have an anti-virus application

24. Have you ever experienced an internet shutdown?

- Yes
- No

25. Have any websites you run been blocked in the state?

- Yes
- No

If Yes, please elaborate:

26. Have any of the articles / content you (or someone you know) have written been removed from the internet?

Yes

No

If yes, please elaborate:

27. Are you aware of any websites being blocked? If so, which ones?

28. What do you do if a website you want to access is blocked?

29. Do you use a VPN?

Yes

No

30. If yes, which VPN do you use?

31. Why do you use a VPN?

32. Are you aware if laws in the state (or country) allow for the censorship of online content?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please elaborate :

33. Are you aware of the processes the authorities follow to order the blocking of web sites?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please elaborate :

34. Are you aware of government authorities ordering the blocking of websites or apps or an internet shutdown?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please elaborate :

35. When the government authorities block websites or order internet shutdowns are there any events that have been referenced as a justification by them? If yes, could you provide some examples of when such things have occurred.

- 36.** Which websites and what types of apps would be interesting to test for blocking in the state?

If you are OK with me contacting you for an additional interview, please share your contact details:

Note: The questions in this questionnaire were used for two different research projects. This report only addresses censorship-related questions and does not address questions related to technology usage.

Annex B: Interview Questions

Section : Examining the importance of Internet

- Is the internet an important medium to access information necessary for your work or life? Why/Why not?
- What kind of information does the internet provide for you personally that would not be available to you otherwise?
- What are the sites/apps you consider as important additions to your life since you were introduced to them?

Section : Blocking

- The web version of Telegram is blocked in the country by the government order.
 - Has this had an impact on your personal or professional life? If so, how?
 - If WhatsApp were blocked, would it impact you? How?
- The government has in the past made arrests and blocked access to mobile apps such as [PUBG](#) and [TikTok](#) in certain parts of India. What are your views on this?
- The Indian government has blocked over [800 pornographic portals](#) over several years. What are your views on this?
- While using the internet, have you encountered any blocked websites or apps?
 - How do you know it is blocked?
 - What is the URL of the site?
 - Were you a regular user of the site?
 - What kind of content did this site host?
 - When did you encounter this block?
- Did this block affect you? If so, how?
 - Did you try to circumvent the block? If so, how?

Section : Freedom of Expression

- Have you personally experienced any forms of censorship (such as the takedown of articles, takedown of websites, takedown of social media posts, arrests due to social media posts) in the state?
 - If so, please elaborate.
 - How did this affect you?
- Have your peers or people you know experienced any forms of censorship in the state?
 - If so, please elaborate.
 - Who was this person?
 - How did it affect their life (if at all)?
 - How did this incident affect you?

Section : Internet Shutdowns

- Has the internet ever been shut down completely in the state? If so, when?
- Which networks were affected by the internet shutdown(s)? On which ISPs was the internet shut down?
- What types of networks (mobile, broadband, etc.) were affected by the internet shutdown(s)?
- How long did the internet shutdown(s) last?
- How often have you experienced internet shutdowns?
- To your knowledge, did ISPs explain why the internet shutdown occurred? If so, what explanation was provided?
- Have authorities commented on the internet shutdown? If yes, what justification did the authorities provide for enforcing the Internet shutdown?
- Did the shutting down of the internet help like the authorities claimed? Please elaborate.
- How did the internet shutdown(s) affect you and your work?

Section: Freedom of Press

- What kind of issues does your newspaper write on?
- In your opinion how important is the website to you and your organization now?
- Has your website ever been blocked?
- Have you ever been asked not to publish an article?

Annex C: Confirmed Blocked Websites

The following 84 domains were confirmed blocked as part of this study:

Blocked domains

desijammers.com	www.indianexpress.com
www.mensxp.com	www.jafrianews.com
www.stormfront.org	www.nndh.com
www.zone-h.org	www.telegraph.co.uk
kafila.org	twocircles.net
www.consumercourtforum.in	www.aljazeera.com
www.consumercourt.in	www.timesofummah.com
www.thepetitionsite.com	www.kavkazcenter.com
dalitstan.org	www.pakalertpress.com
www.defence.pk	www.khilafah.com
www.alqassam.ps	www.hindujagruti.org
adultfriendfinder.com	bdcurma.wordpress.com
1337x.to	exposingtheleft.blogspot.com
a2ztamilsongs.com	iipmexposed.blogspot.in
apniisp.com	harishc.blogspot.in
chimatamusic.com	gauravsabnis.blogspot.in
dishant.com	kitabkhana.blogspot.in
downloadming.com	nanopolitan.blogspot.in
filefreak.com	ramblingz.blogspot.in
funmaza.com	bharatkalyan97.blogspot.in
funsrape.com	hinduexistence.wordpress.com
musicindiaonline.com	janamejayan.wordpress.com
muskurahat.com	pctvbill.blogspot.in
depositfiles.com	rogerfacts.blogspot.in
sendspace.com	sambharmafia.blogspot.in
sevanthi.com	sierainindia.blogspot.in
songslover.com	takbeeremusalsal.blogspot.in
tamilkey.info	thepiratescove.us
bollywoodmp4.com	vijayknair.blogspot.in
karachimag.com	www.bloggernews.net
mp3.com	www.rahulyadav.com
paktimes.com	blog.hiddenharmonies.org
topupmp3.com	youthcurry.blogspot.in
wapmaza.mobi	blogs.tribune.com.pk
www.depositfiles.com	ganduhotspot.blogspot.com
article.wn.com	islampeace1.wordpress.com
articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com	merhrom.wordpress.com
caravanmagazine.in	mypetjawa.mu.nu
getahead.rediff.com	pnpaper.blogspot.in
www.abc.net.au	takbeeremusalsal.blogspot.com
www.fakingnews.com	www.farazahmed.com
www.hinduhumanrights.org	javedseo.blogspot.in

The complete list of URLs confirmed blocked as part of this study is available through this [spreadsheet](#).

Annex D: Quotes from Interviewees

Internet Shutdowns Enforced During Crisis

“ If there is some problem or crisis with the government. That time internet is shutdown ”

“ [The internet shutdown] is very frequent in Manipur when there is a law and order situation. ”

“ We have experienced [shutdowns] during crisis time like during the ILP (Inner Line Permit) time or during the CAB (Citizen Amendment Bill) Introduction. ”

“ Every now and then when there [is a crisis] in the state, the govt takes into shutting down [the] internet, which is believed to be the only way to calm down the issue. ”

Restlessness Caused by Lack of Internet

“ We all are so attached [to] our phone. Every single time we remove our phone whether there is any new information or new chat or anything new. But we are prone to take out our phone and see[ing]. ”

“ It did affect my life because we are so addicted to WhatsApp and Facebook. So you kind of feel lost without [an] internet connection. It's a part of everyday life now. ”

“ It was not easy. You have the habit of scrolling up and down. The phone is lifeless without the internet. It's more to do with the fact that it is a distraction to get hooked on to smartphone applications. We are so dependent on the internet now that we cannot live without it. If we have [a] low network people start juggling or search for better networks. ”

Ramifications on the Press

“ Since [we] publish international and national news. I could not get any updated news for 3-4 days due to [internet shutdowns]. ”

“ It affects us to some extent in getting some news items. But, most of the news items we get from the local [incidents] so it did not affect us that badly... ”

“ Ours is an evening paper so time is very limited. So our reporters [are] used to send[ing] the story from the spot itself using [the] internet, i.e., mobile internet. [This] is not possible when the [mobile internet] is shutdown. They have to [travel] all the way here [to office] and it takes them around 30-40 mins. In that [time] [the reported] could have already sent the story to me and I could check it. [In] Those ways internet shutdown affects us. ”

“ I cannot get any news with the issues there. It's a great loss to us. ”

Self-Censorship

“ Before [Previously] I used to be very impulsive in my reply in WhatsApp and in Facebook. But now I have been careful because I know people are watching all over. Especially if you make comments on the government or BJP or any public leaders. I think people are targeting us... I used to be impulsive, now I am a bit cautious. Careful about the comment that I pass or I just ignore it. I think it's better to be safe than sorry. ”

“ [Regarding] Social media post I am very careful. I read the comments and I want to write, but I don't want to write. I don't want to get myself into some trouble, you know. Because there is a lot of hatred posts within the communities. Which I want to get involved [with] but I don't want to. So I don't dare to. ”

Social Policing and Patriarchy

“ Sometimes I feel like [in] Manipur, we are under colonial threat. It is being laid [down] as a colonization, first British, then it's India. People are suffering a lot, they do not know how to resolve this. Everything is there and then you know in this development what's happening is like they are again targeting people [especially] weaker sections of the society like women, transgenders. It is very patriarch[al] and the women folk also are not willing [to stand up to it] or I don't know why [but] they are very much observed with this patriarchy and they are internalized with the system. And what is happening is everything in the decision making there is no space for transgender people and there is no space for women. That women [are used] as a contributor. Women are used as political tools so far. If we do something, if we wear something short, then they start screening us. They can easily make it public or else they can make a statement, they can put it on Facebook or social media, different social networks and in newspapers. ”

Incident of Threat from UGs to a Press Respondent

“ Except once there were some death threats from the underground organization. Not just me, there were a number of editors [who received threats]. [The UGs] were having some factional fight and they wanted their [updates] to be published and we refused [to publish those] after some point. He (a member of the UG faction) was calling the editors about this. I had gone [out of town] and on the way they asked me to come [and meet them]. I landed [in Imphal] and went [to meet them]. Then when the people called up[,] I just told them if it is news we publish but if it is not news [we won't publish]. Moreover if we publish the other factions will send theirs we just can't keep doing that. Then he said ok and it was all well settled. Then he called all the editors to his place. [Because] this matter is settled so we want to honor you [with] tea. He [provided] the address of a safe house [for us to go to]. All the editors went there but I did not go because I had a personal issue. Apparently [the members of UG faction's] were looking for me [at the meeting]. They asked for me and I was not there. Then they said [the editors who went to the meeting] will not go back until I come. Then I had [a pretty] heated argument [over the phone with them] and then finally they said my paper will be banned and [then they] let go [of the editors] after keeping them in the cabin for a day without food and [basic amenities]. All the editors were also so angry. They went and informed the [police about where they were taken and also especially the threat was on me]. The police went and raided the place and captured a few people. After that there was no easy compromise. We had to be in that kind of a state for [a] long time. Fortunately that particular insurgent group was a small faction. They did not have too much strength and they

were under pressure because the police were always after them. Ultimately they called for a truce."

Informal Request of Takedown from an Intelligence Bureau Officer

" There was one [article] about current chief secretary how he managed to give [a] contract to his son and the regulation was that it is not allowed to give contract for more than two crores to any party. So this was a contract amount of twenty crores, which was split into 20 to 25 parts. That kind of story. Before [this], there was another story [about] him. He got the hint that we have the story, so he asked the IB [Intelligence Bureau] man here [to intervene]. The IB man called me when I was in [in another city]. He said there is [this article] please don't publish it. I told him in his case I can't help him if it is [an] opinion [article] I can hold it for a few days so we can discuss this but this was news so we just publish it. They said they have to confirm certain things for a very lame reason. We had the look we had the papers with us so we just publish[ed] it. "

Story of Informal Request of Takedown from a Politician

"There are many articles. But I will tell you about a specific one. We published the news report regarding the second marriage of a Minister. It happens that the photograph [of the wedding appeared] on social media and then it [went viral]. So we also got a few photographs [and a video of him]. I sent my colleague to enquire about [the issue]. We ...and came to know that he was marrying a second wife without divorcing the first wife. We published the news. First I received a threat call from the Minister himself. So I told him OK let's talk about it tomorrow morning [as it is late in the night]. Next morning when I asked him what [he] would like, he said 'OK, let's settle the matter. I am sorry yesterday I was a bit harsh, I was out of control'. He really had forgotten that he is a public figure and anything he does which is against the law is news for everyone. So he used that [argument] that personal life should not be published. Let's just [close] the matter. I said 'OK let's close the matter.'"

