Day 2 Session 1: Freedom of expression

Time: 3:00 UTC - 4:30 UTC

Objective: This session is aimed at exploring the laws protecting freedom of expression across the Southeast Asian region, while also examining the restrictions placed on this right within different legal systems. Participants will look closely at laws addressing hate speech, sedition, blasphemy, and defamation in their regional contexts. The session will further provide a brief historical overview of these laws and restrictions, tracing how they continue to surface in both offline and online spaces today.

Session plan:

The session will aim to cover questions such as:

- What are the provisions that cover freedom of expression in international human rights law and national legislation in Southeast Asia?
- What does international law say on conditions for restrictions on freedom of expression, and how does it compare to the kinds of restrictions we see in Southeast Asia (hate speech, sedition, blasphemy, defamation and mis/disinformation etc.)?
- What kinds of laws are being passed in Southeast Asia in relation to freedom of expression online? How does this differ from how freedom of expression is regulated offline?
- What is the role of platforms with respect to freedom of expression online? What impact does the current policy approach towards platforms in Southeast Asia have on freedom of expression online? What needs to change?

**Reading materials are hyperlinked, please click the text to access*

Reading Materials:

- Global Information Society Watch 2017 special edition: Unshackling expression - A study on laws criminalising expression online in Asia
- Unshackling Expression: The Philippines Report
- Virtual Verdicts: A study on the criminalisation of online expression in Sri Lanka
- Unshackling Expression: The Nepal Report
- Freedom on the Net 2025

Presentation Slide

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