Radicalisation in the digital age – How to counter online extremism and build a counter narrative

Expected Speakers

	Full Name	Organization	Designation	Country/Economy of Residence	Stakeholder Group	Status of Confirmation
Ms.	Nighat Dad	Digital Rights Foundation	Executive Director	Pakistan	Civil Society	Confirmed
Ms.	Irene Poetranto	The Citizen Lab	Communications Officer and Researcher	Canada	Academia	Confirmed
Ms.	JacsmKee	Association for Progressive Communication	Women's Rights and ICT Advocacy Coordinator	Malaysia	Civil Society	Confirmed
Mr.	ArthitSuriyawongkul	Thai Netizen Network	Coordinator	Thailand	Civil Society	Confirmed
Ms.	JelenPaclarin	Women's Legal Bureau	Executive Director	Philippines	Civil Society	Confirmed
Mr.	LihShiunGoh	Google	Southeast Asia Policy Manager	South & Southeast Asia	Private Sector	Confirmed
Ms.	Ankhi Das	Facebook	Public Policy Director	India	Private Sector	Confirmed

Expected Moderators

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Ms.	LuavutZahid	Digital Rights Foundation	Program Manager	Pakistan	Civil Society	Confirmed

Brief Summary of Presentations

Irene Poetranto, communications officer and researcher at The Citizen Lab was the first to speak on the panel and expanded on internet filtering and censorship in Indonesia. In research that she conducted with her organization, it was found that tumblr had been blocked because of netsweeperscatergorisation of pornography in countries like Qatar. Blasphemous and anti-Islam content had also been filtered out in Pakistan. She also spoke about entire sites being blocked out when efforts were made to filter content. Whenever there is any kind of an effort to stop hate speech there will always be collateral damage because automated processes do not identity good or bad content, they only identity keywords that need to be put away. In doing so, basic right to information is hindered and information withheld. The conversation expanded into how alternative narratives can be targeted as well because of such policies. The many privacy and security related implications of such censorship and filters were added to the discussion. JacSmKee, Women's Rights and ICT Advocacy Coordinator at the Association for Progressive Communication then spoke about the gender question i.e. why do women end up with ISIS. From the outside what we see is women joining the camp of people who will do nothing but use them - however, young people all over the world have a need to belong somewhere. With ISIS women have found a way to be equal to men in a way. They are told that their actions are just as important as those of the men. They truly believe that they are going to be able to make the world a better place. That need for belonging and doing something bigger then themselves is what drives many young people to the Daesh. Jac was of the view that lack of tolerance for opposing points of view has led to this situation where fundamentalist ideas reign supreme. Radicalization is spreading through social media, and because alternative discourse is to hard to push through it can only lead to more and more radicalization. ArthitSuriyawongkul, Coordinator at the Thai Netizen Network then went onto talk about radicalization and how it is complicated to define it. Within Thailand the radical voices are those of dissent. It is easier to do away with and discredit a movement that earns the title of 'radical'. But the

reality is that one person's radical is another person's freedom fighter. What governments do is create a narrative branding a group radical so as to develop a consensus against them. JelenPaclarin is a women's rights advocate and the Executive Director of the Women's Legal Bureau helped highlight how women's rights tie into the conversation surrounding radicalization. While religiously fuelled radicalization takes precedence over most other forms, the new internet age is showing us that the next big discussion to be had is around women. Entire movements and campaigns have been constructed against women that do not follow the stereotypical roles that have been defined for them. Women sometimes are put in a very challenging situation because they're not supposed to question the status quo, she said. Radicalisation has made women worse off online. She spoke about the death of a trans woman, and the time she and other activists fought against their own president during the elections because he cracked a rape joke. A lot of comments instead of addressing the issue at hand began attacking her and her colleagues instead. One said: 'I hope you will get raped so you know difference between joke and rape.' Sometimes we are looking at fundamentalists, but sometimes it has seeped into our everyday lives and we can't tell that it's a part of our everyday lives. Hate and violence against women is a part of our lives and we don't notice. The reason for that is that patriarchy is deep rooted in our society. Nighat Dad, Digital Rights Foundation Executive Director, spoke about Radicalisation and how it is being done to do two things basically: one to get recruits to promote hate, and two to target a certain set of people. In most cases, the targets are minorities. Be it ISIS or a Hindu extremists, the targets are some form of minorities - could be the LGBT, could be women, could be religious minorities, etc. Women are also a target of radicalization, despite not classifying as a minority, the power dynamics put them at risk anytime they try to break away from the status quo. She spoke about the recent QandeelBaloch case and highlighted how hatespeech and radicalization against outspoken women can take hideous shape in the offline world. LihShuinGoh, Southeat Asia Policy Manager at Google and Ankhi Das from Facebook tackled what the platforms were doing to ensure the right of privacy and security for their users in a growing hostile environment. From religious and sexual minorities to the gender question, they helped highlight the efforts that the platforms were making to tackle hatespeech and radicalization - and where they maybe falling short. For instance, Google is trying to expand its outreach with NGOs that are trying to build a counter narrative and tackle hatespeech, while on the other hand Facebook's rep admitted

that tacking hatespeech in regional languages are proving to be a difficult task for the platform.

Substantive summary of the key issues raised and the discussion

The workshop, titled Radicalisation in the digital age - How to counter online extremism and build a counter narrative, looked into radicalization in the Asian region and the different forms that it can take up. The workshop was proposed by Nighat Dad and moderated by Digital Rights Foundation Gender and Tech Coordinator, LuavutZahid. When we talk about radicalization our main focus almost always becomes ISIS. In the Asian region - and even globally - it feels like the most significant threat. Most recently, ISIS is on the fore front of news about radicalization again. The Dhaka attacks left more than 20 dead, and were conducted by young, somewhat privileged kids. But ISIS gets all the press, others are radicalizing minds online too. Just in South Asia, there is a problem of Hindu extremists, the Taliban are using social media to radicalize minds, and while ISIS hasn't been able to take roots in Pakistan, religious extremist parties continue to use social media to push fwd their agenda. South East Asia is no different, as our panelists from Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand helped point out. The panel helped shed light on different aspects of the situation in Asia. - Radicalisation can mean something for one person and another thing for another because there hasn't yet been set a specific definition of what it means in the global context. - Efforts to censor or filter content online in Indonesia resulted in actually a wipe out of content that may not even have been relevant. When we opt for mass actions there is always collateral damage. - Counter narratives being built through digital means have also been targeted with malware and their data has been taken down. Meanwhile it continues to be hard to report and remove content online. - Radicalisation has to do with the youth having a need to belong to something and somewhere. While outsiders do not understand the appeal of something like Daesh, for the young girls that join it, it's more about finding equal footing with the men - The issues can also stem from a twisted narrative. In the case of Thailand resistance is painted as radicalization, and by doing so it becomes easier to discredit. One person's radical could be another's freedom fighter. - Radicalisation is being done to do two things basically: one to get recruits to promote hate, and two to target a certain set of people - In most cases, the targets are minorities. Be it ISIS or a Hindu extremists, the targets are some form of minorities - could be the LGBT, could be women, could be religious minorities, etc. - Women are also a

target of radicalization, despite not classifying as a minority, the power dynamics put them at risk anytime they try to break away from the status quo

Conclusions and Suggestions of Way Forward

- Internet filtering and censorship to control radicalization needs more oversight to ensure that governments are not going after content that simply doesn't sit well with them. Even existing processes targeting the right kind of problems need to be improved so that their take down does not result in simultaneous take downs of other unrelated content as well. - Platforms need to improve on their reporting mechanisms so that alternative voices are not as easily silences as a group finding the right number of people to help report a post that it doesn't agree with. - We need to see what kind of responses that are needed from allies and not just feminists, and also from the platforms and then fix them. - The conversation around radicalization has to be extended to include the many forms it takes, it also needs to be nuanced so as to ensure that groups are not branded without the need to - There is a dire need for a counter narrative to find its space online. We need to engage the youth in the counter narrative to empower them to make their own choices, this requires that they also be given awareness - Community level initiatives are also needed. At times it has been seen that people join radicalized groups for a sense of belonging, that need to be sustained through something else. - Companies like Facebook and Google need to further ask how they will deal with problematic legislations and government pressure