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FROM SHUTDOWN TO SOLIDARITY: CO-DESIGNING A SOUTH ASIA RAPID-RESPONSE PROTOCOL FOR INTERNET SHUTDOWNS
LANGTANG HALL
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>> Hi everyone. We are about to start the session in Langtang Hall from shutdown to solidarity. And speakers, whenever you are ready.

>> DISHA VERMA: >> Hi everyone, good morning. And welcome to our session from shutdown to solidarity. I'm Disha from Tech Global Institute. And we are happy to have you with this workshop style discussion. And we will keep it light and informal and keep it conversational. I would love everyone in the room to participate in the session and give their inputs as well. I'll take you in the next five minutes through some agenda items today for this discussion and what we will be talking about. As you can tell from the title this is going to be a discussion on internet shutdowns and also having a very I think intentional focus on advocacy and combating these authoritarian instruments in our regions in our countries.

Is everyone settled in? Do you have a cup of coffee with you? Is everyone feeling good? Thanks. It's always good to hear. And let me spend some time talking about internet shutdowns why it's important for us to talk about it and why it's a pressing issue for the region. And when we mean when we

say this is an extension of authoritarianism in the region.

So internet shutdowns. I think we say in a relative term we do mean we are interested when the government has the power or exercises the power to throttle internet speeds or to shutdown internet all together in a defined geographical region. And the reasons for which this happens and this has been some documented research on this is usually conflict. There could be certain triggers to an internet shutdown but it's usually I think half the internet shutdowns that happen in 2025 were because of certain internal conflict or turmoil and unfortunately even a democratic event such as a protest qualifies as conflict in certain areas and regions.

Why is this a problem? What are the trends surrounding internet shutdowns? In 2025, according to documented research from Access Now and Human Rights Watch, there were over 300 internet shutdowns across the world and half were triggered by conflict or protests. In this list of notorious actors that perform or exercise internet shutdown or throttling, and 10 countries were from the Asia-Pacific region. And the leader the international capital of internet shutdowns the top three were from this region as well. Which is Myanmar, India, and Pakistan. I think that triggers a conversation and a necessitates understanding why we come from certain governments that think this is constitutionally legal to do.

What is it about internet shutdowns that so authoritarian and how it violates the fundamental freedoms have been violated through a internet shutdown. And how importantly do we come pat them in assume and cooperative way? Today's discussion and the workshop, which everyone is invited to join and participate in, we will talk about some case studies and examples of internet shutdowns or speed throttling being abuse by governments in certain situations, which we will have one of our panelist speak about. And then we will also then touch upon certain costs of an internet shutdown. Why is it that we suffer at the hands of the internet being shut?

In a digital state we all come from, we all have governments interested in power and progress and digital transformations but they cut down internet access for people. And what the economic and cost of the internet shutdown. At the end we'll talk how we can combat it. And I want to first start with Priya Ahsan Chowdhury, a panelist joining remotely. And she's working in Bangladesh and Bangladesh from two years is a youth uprising from the monsoon uprising with the government

being removed from power. And with this uprising came heavy human costs, of course, and also saw the prevalence of technologies being abused against protesters. And this took the form of spy ware technologies and military technologies like drones and surveillance tech and also internet shutdowns being abused to throttle communication and to stop people from coming down in the streets?

Can I call on Priya joining us online to take us through the Bangladesh picture and present an picture of the 2024 uprisings and talk a little bit about what happened after the case where people went to government and say, hey, it's not okay to cut down the internet, what can we do to remedy that? Priya, if you are online with us, can you please come in?

>> PRIYA AHSAN CHOWDHURY: Thank you, Disha. And first of all, apologies I couldn't be there in person. And I am having a painful eye issue, I will keep my video off, if that's all right. To begin with, I would say that internet shutdowns are not quite new in Bangladesh. We have seen connectivity restrictions in a number of different contexts, actually. During a student protest back in 2018. And also the election period during 2018, as in December 2018, we have seen that. There was some protests in 2021 when Modi was visiting Bangladesh. And there was not entire shutdowns but restrictions. And in 2022 and 2023 were oppositions were protesting there were some restrictions around internet. And of course, then came the nationwide shutdown in July 2024, when the during the student peoples uprising, which eventually led to the previous regime being overthrown.

And we also had a significant legal accountability gap in the area. And the issue is, first of all, our constitution obviously protects freedom of expression with some legitimate restrictions and the Article 39. And of course, it also protects the right to peaceful assembly. And we are a party to the international develop innocent on civil and political rights and of course under section Article 19 our freedom of expression is protected by that and we are bound by that. But Bangladesh did not ever have a clear statutory provision authorizing the government to shutdown the internet. In practice, what happens is the shutdown is imposed through a like telecom regulatories and the TVs agency.

It's not clear who authorized a shutdown under what legal authority and what conditions had to be satisfy is what independent mechanism can review that decision.

So now if I start with the July 2024 uprising, that saw the problem on a larger scale and the problem began on a public university where the protest began. And it expanded to mobile internet, particularly targeting some platforms, restricted and then there was a nationwide black out. That was of complete black out and complete shutdown for five days. And then after those five days broadband was gradually restored and not entirely. The speed was extremely slow. And some major social media platforms and stuff remained restricted.

Then again, on the 4th of August, the internet was again shutdown by that time I think the entire nation had come down to streets to demanding the regime's resignation. And then on the 5th of August when she finally fled the country, we again had like a proper shutdown. So after all this, the UN factfinding mission in Bangladesh, July 2024 uprising found that the shutdowns were imposed without any prior announcement and following any due process or adequate justification basically.

So we are talking not just about a complete black out but a range of techniques like throttling, mobile shutdown, broadband shutdowns and platform blocking.

Those restrictions were imposed while mass protests were taking place. And serious human rights violations were being reported like literally there were killings and people were being planed and there were abductions. You name it. There's so much on at the time. What the effect of those restrictions give us? Basically obviously connectivity restrictions effected people's ability ability to communicate. And journalists' ability to reach sources. Lawyers and civil society organizations the ability to gather information and also people who are unable to pay utility bills in some cases.

There were also electricity connections, which were effected in some of the places in Bangladesh. What this experience taught us this July 2024 shutdown taught us was that an internet shutdown can become an accountability shutdown because you are literally shutting down information flow in every which way you can. It can interfere not only with expression, like free flow of information and freedom of expression but also with the gathering of evidence and the ability of this society to scrutinize the state action. And so obviously during the black out, newsrooms had to resort to offline methods to transform material and produce newspapers. While journalists struggle to verify casualty figures and

communicate resources.

After all this, what happened was in when Bangladesh had a interim government in place after the fall of the government during the July 2024 protests. So this interim government actually amended our telecom law the Bangladesh Telecommunication Act to prevent intentional or malicious shutdown or restriction of telecommunication and internet services. I would not say this ends the accountability question because the real test is what happens when the next crisis comes. And this is where the accountability proceedings following the July 2024 are important because the shutdowns are now being examined in proceedings before the international crimes tribunal concerning the 2024 uprising treating as crimes against humanity issue.

What is significant is the proceedings are beginning to establish the chain of which the shutdown was allegedly ordered and implemented. Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulations Commission official testified before the tribunal that the nationwide shutdown was carried out following instructions from the former ICT as an information communication technology state minister.

And described WhatsApp communications used to convey instructions. So basically they were instructed through WhatsApp messages. And another ICT proceeding, the prosecution produced the recording, which captures the another form of former minister instructing the ICT minister to slow the internet during the uprising are with the ICT minister saying he would need approval from the then Prime Minister. So we are of course yet to have the fine final finds of the criminal responsibility as these are ongoing cases and then this kind of gives you like the picture to how they abused and all the powers. The executive abused all the powers left right and center. And there was no due process followed at all.

Now looking at South Asia more broadly, Bangladesh obviously clearly is not unique. India, Pakistan in particular have also used shutdowns. May not be nationwide ones but they also had shutdowns, internet shutdowns around protests and political unrest and so on.

So I think there is a broader regional tendency to treat internet shutdowns as tool of crisis management. But Bangladesh experience actually shows why we need to be careful about normalizing that approach. So my take away from Bangladesh

would be that an internet shutdown is not simply a telecommunications decision. It is an exercise of public power. And if that power affects freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and journalism, evidence gathering and the ability to hold the state accountable, then it needs to be subject to clear law and necessity and proportionality tests and then they should be independent oversight and an effective remedy for that. So Bangladesh is now taken an important step and by obviously expressly prohibiting shutdown in law. But the question is whether that protection will hold when the next crisis comes as when we have the next crisis. This doesn't quite, you know, promise accountability. So the next situation would have to unfold before we can actually see what has really changed. Thank you.

>> DISHA VERMA: Thank you so much, Priya, for painting that picture for us. I think Bangladesh presents a recent but huge case study for what can go wrong through a act of throttling or stopping internet and we are seeing factions develop throughout the region. And the top three actors of internet shutdowns from in 2025 were from the region. Which also begs the question what makes this a popular means for exerting state control?

Priya mentioned there were several actors and that's not just a telecom decision it's power and governance through fear. And from this distance we can see there's mull approximately vendors and multiple stakeholders involved in the process, which becomes, A, the user of the internet, person with a mobile phone and trying to send a message to their friend. Second, the state which in this case is the telecom authority of any state that issues these orders. And third and a very important and significant and interesting stakeholders is the telecom provider and the private industry supplier in some context the state players which provides the internet packages and is then the telecom operator receives the notice of a telecom authority saying is to internet or stop the proceeds and stop in the region and then you have to comply with it. Or else there's certain consequences to that. They at the cost of their own profit and at the cost of their own customer satisfaction stop the internet.

Another stakeholder becomes businesses. People who rely on digital payments on even a card payment or even ATM withdrawals that all of that stops in a region of the internet stops. So there is -- there are multiple moving stakeholders in this ecosystem.

What we are interested to understand how we can approach each of these stakeholders to make a case for why the internet should not be shutdown or throttled. So let's do an exercise in the room. Where I think I would like urge all of you to think a little differently about internet shutdowns. I would like people in the room to assume different roles. Maybe think like a telecom many operator of think of a state. And exchange why it's important for us to do an internet shutdown. Because once we start thinking like those stakeholders, we'll then in the second part of the session actually talk about how we tackle these arguments.

So I'm going -- I want to open this room. I think Farhan and I will go around with mics and encourage you to think about what can be an argument in a state government mind or a telecom operators mind when they comply with a shutdown order. And any hands and any engagement is welcome.

>> If you put on the cap of the state and you are the telecom or the state and you are justifying it. Yes?

>> Hello, everyone, from Bangladesh. I work in Bangladesh telecommunications company limited so when the shutdown happened, I was the part of the team who had to implement the shutdown. We were actually informed virally. There was no documents but the issue was from the perspective of the government that if we don't shutdown the internet, there'll be more chaos and more misinformation will be spread. And we also faced a attack in our government websites. It was attacks were sponsored from outside. So from government's perspective, it was the issue how we can control the crowd, how can we control -- how they can control the (off microphone) so this is the fact from their end as far as I understand. Thank you.

>> Anyone else?

>> I want to emphasize the shutdown is a political decision. It's not even a government decision that's a political party who decides. The problem here is what happens after the shutdown. So there's documentation and reports and like clear evidence in Myanmar and Bangladesh and many other countries. And human rights violations being committed and like war crimes. Genocide and so on. So how are we going to tackle that I think is more crucial. We can propose things, of course, the government of the day when they want to hold power they are not going to listen to you.

Either we want to like empower the community on the ground to do more documentation during the shutdown. What is happening on the ground. Either a video documentation any type of documentation. And hopefully one day when there's power is up or internet is up, they can share what is happening and can hold people accountable.

Example I want to say about the UN and human rights there's enough framework legal framework. During the operations and genocide it was shutdown and use for certain attack but no one bothered on the company's involvement. They are only talking about the state. And now the case is already in the court. And they are saying the company might be complicit of crimes against humanity. So I think we need a multiple approach and prompt to make the government and companies and people accountable.

So they have certain fear to do it again.

>> Thank you for that. And a question I would float to the room is again, wearing a different hat than we usually. Is a internet shutdown ever justified? Do you think there's a situation where the internet should be cut off? Is a it a power the government should have? All opinions welcome.

>> Okay. So in previous session I was trying to speak something from Manipur, the India shutdown. What people are causing the stakeholders are discussing and of course I'm not an operator and don't work that way. So about I think preventing and curative mechanism. What are the two steps backward? For example you have to decide before the internet shutdown because the decision cannot be instantly made and the situation emerging towards a shutdown is also happening overnight. So it's emerging. What are the emerging just like weather forecast happening and the decisions based on that. What are those -- the mic? So the kind of the trends that's happening that forces the shutdown what are the case of the trends?

What's the preventative mechanism that can be taken? Instead of getting to a shutdown mode. And every time this cannot be done. So I think what is more important is that the telecom operators versus the government also responsibility they should go one or two steps backward. And have a procedure. And have a mechanism to gauge the sensitivity of the issues. And then look for alternative mechanisms to engage the stakeholders. That time zone has to be there. And I'm not being able to frame properly but some protocol and some kind of thing because this cannot be a ready available mechanic mechanism for the shutdown.

They are getting the trends coming in and the social media posts coming in so the trends knows what way it's going to. What needs to be done with the mechanism like a alternate dispute mechanism kind of thing.

>> Let me throw out to the room. What are the narratives or justifications you hear are with a internet shutdown? How is it justified by the state?

>> Thank you. We also have (off microphone) we have platform shutdown in Sri Lanka. The justification they give is like to prevent misinformation. Or people sharing -- making the people more -- okay. Do you need me to repeat? So the basically they say we want to prevent misinformation or people getting more aggressive and getting hyped up. So that's what they are using but we don't know the real reason.

>> Hi. I think the misinformation and disinformation is not the justified reason. When you stop the information there's more chance to spread misinformation, disinformation. One us suggestion, if you want to shutdown the internet then you have to have a strategy to know people before time. And then later on, when you reopen it and to explain everything to counter misinformation and disinformation. You know what is happening in Pakistan, the complete black out. The people don't know what is happening over there. What happened during the shutdown? They have strategy to counter setting. Is this is my point of view.

>> Good morning, everybody. I'm currently working as a system senior manager and I work as a senior lecturer. My understanding, internet is a very critical infrastructure. So it should not be shutdown at any cost. So if we have to prevent this disinformation or misinformation, I think we should take control of the platform. We should like control the platform rather than shutting down the internet. It's like stopping everything.

From Nepal, in terms of Nepal, we support different business critical operations like health care infrastructure from here in Nepal. I was a part of the health care data company. So we support different critical infrastructure. If we shutdown the internet then definitely we won't be able to support those business critical operation. So internets should not be shutdown at any cost. Not just government. Like we should have some international or different public-private organization that should be working not to shutdown those

internet in any cost. Thank you so much.

>> I would add a few more nuggets for thought here. I am from India. And recently, the internet shutdowns have been abused to the level of they impose a internet shutdown in 15-meter radius sometimes. And a building fell down in New Delhi recently and took the live of many young boys at a hostel building and. So they shutdown for three days in that area where the building toppled. And this is a unlawful example but the instrumentality for the state tall most local level to be able to do this means it's highly normalized. There's a standard protocol to be able to do this and it's okay internally for a state to issue these orders.

I would urge more people to maybe telecommunication authorities in the room to think of the role of telecommunication operators in this how easily is a 15-meter shutdown being levy by the local operator. Should the local operator should be able to write back to government or need a reason or need an order or need something more than just to shutdown out of fear. So that's maybe a train of thought that you would like to talk about.

>> This is a relevant question but I think as from the India perspective, telecom operators are licensed, their license is mandate them to follow regulations. What I think the ask should be is more transparency of the orders. Because you normally don't see the orders you don't even get to know them before they are executed and I think the fear of which they always share if you speak to regulators is they will not be able to manage the disinformation or manage the crowd.

Now, I think the capacity building of them also needs to be done, okay, if there is a narrative going, you can also counter misinformation. This is been a long debate going on from at least quite a few years. But edge they think of internet as a tap of which you can close and everything gets shut, which ideally doesn't map.

>> Hello, everyone, I'm from Myanmar. Actually like it's frequently happening the internet shutdowns in our country. But the reason is not about like the preventing the spread of misinformation, disinformation. Specific to think country, the internet usually shutdown especially before the military commit to some brutality to the people. So why they do this is actually they don't want everyone to keep connected. Because they cut off the information so as a result people cannot pass

the information what is happening in the area as well. So at the time, what's happening on the ground is that whether the telecom companies or the multistakeholder approach or some sort of thing, I think no other organization can override the authority of the government.

So the thing is, there is one thing which is like the administration say the regime they also don't trust in any kind of like the private companies and telecom companies as well. So one thing we could possibly do but it's more possible depends on the domestic demonstration. Everyone as someone mentioned here for the internet company I they also need the license from the government as well. And also from the government they also function with a different local legal context as well. So to like they establish pre-agreed protocols with the humanitarians and with the telecom company so at the time they can require the connectivity if there's a some kind of crisis happening in those specific region so. That could be one thing we could possibly do. But it's not easy to make sure that the multistakeholder approach kind of like the encourage or because even the Southeast Asia we have a different legal context or something.

That's my perspective. Thank you so much.

>> We have online as well and then we'll come back.

>> We have participation so first -- --

>> Omor, can you please come in with your comment.

>> Thank you for when we discuss meaningful access and digital rights we must reject internet shutdown as legitimate governance tool. We cannot shutdown the internet all year around because there's a chance of public ills or misinformation. The excuses we constantly hear from governments and internet service providers do not make any sense. And they absolutely do not justify stripping away our fundamental freedom of expression.

I actually raised this exact issue when I spoke at the UN headquarters during the summit of the future consultation regarding the internet blackouts during the Bangladesh student protest in July 2024. So during that national crisis, the government completely severed our connectivity and it was not a safety measure, it paralyzed the economy, cut citizens off the emergency services and isolated when they were the most vulnerable. And I had some personal experience as well because

I had lost my friends during the student protest. And we simply couldn't communicate with each other just because there was no internet. And there is no connectivity.

Digital access is a basic human right. And we have to stop treating the internet as a switch that authorities can click off whenever they face political pressure. And we cannot sacrifice freedom of expression under the guise of maintaining order. And thank you for the floor.

>> Thank you, Omor, we are very sorry for your loss. We have one more online participate, Nikhill, if we could have your comment.

>> Sure. Thank you for the opportunity. I think we as a forum, I think we need to make peace with a fact we need to respect each of the entities and the government, the political parties the telecom companies and us as consumers. And look, think of us as all of these people and all of these entities in a chain.

First and foremost, I think more and more younger people need to get into this public discourse and need to get into the policymaking. Because we have a lot of talent. We have a lot of passion. And we have a lot of educated people in today's day and age. So I think that needs to be priority number 1. Second is I think if that happens, we can bring in something that used to be used way back when called business rules. If for example as a consumer, you shutdown the internet as a telecom company, I don't pay you for those number of hours. It should be that level of transparency in the system built in. the telecom companies in turn if they are getting impacted by a political party or a government's decision need to have a business rule that says if you are going to cause a shutdown or going to armistice us for a shutdown for this many days this is the loss of cost you will incur. And I'm not saying incur cost and put in a barricade but if you will bring in the business rules and each entity starts functioning in a more transparent and accountability.

If we were to do this, and if these were to really happen, again, public discourse, and a lot of dialogue. And at love lot of those kind of these types of forums were to push for it. And imagine a world where this you are your internet there was somebody who said that the building and collapsed within a 15-meter radius the internet went down. All of those people in that particular area if all of them don't pay that's going to

cost the telecom company in the millions. The telecom company was mandated by probably the electronics or technology minister. They have to pay. If everybody knows there's going to be an impact of their decision and their action, the whole chain tends to benefit out of that.

I'm not saying it's going to be heaven on earth overnight. It will take time. But if we start making these steps towards this, I think it will be a much better world.

>> We have one more in the audience.

>> I want to draw your attention especially the young scholars and researchers and policy people who just engage in policymaking and my opinion is that mass internet shutdowns and that regional and country wise, the big area wise, internet shutdowns is now that kind of things are very decreasing and we are able not to -- it is there but it would be decreased as a number of number wise and location wise. There should be increase of the small pocket internet shutdowns. Suppose that as she said that it's the billing the nearby prisons, nearby some specific places. So I think -- my observation is we are not talking about that kind of a small pocket internet shutdowns. The most harmful issue now we have to discuss. And do more research. And do fighting for prevent this kind of things. I think it is this is the time we need aspects we have to deal and we have to discuss and we have to take actions.

>> Thank you. And last two comments here.

>> Thank you. I want to share some perspective from the Pacific, Fiji in particular. We had four coups, three led by the military. And we have a (off microphone) back in the day, talking of 87 -- so -- so I'll speak about the 1987 coup. And there was one in 2006. In 2006, we did not have a internet shutdown. But all throughout -- can you hear me now? Okay. So I just wanted to share some perspective of the Pacific. We had four coups in Fiji and of course some were led by the military. And there's quite a lot of history to unpack there. However, what we had noticed is one of the first things that happens is when the government is overthrown or taken over by another entity or military, for that matter. The first place they shutdown the Fintel that's the organization that connects us to internationally. Of course, because they don't want anyone else to interfere with the -- it's of course they are hurting democracy by even going through this entire -- we had a coup culture but we evolved.

One thing I will say even in the last which was 2006 there was no internet shutdown. None at all. However there was some [audio dropped] against the new government which of course is not democratically elected and there were some harsh statements and strong sentiments online and they were take on the the military camps and they were questioned. Which is still trying to press them. I think one thing -- which worked for us in the Pacific is cognizance of the information act. There's been a lot of initiative in trying to help people understand to the Pacific people to understand what the information act entails what is freedom of peach.

And we also had a lot of support from the CSOs who made sure that people have a voice. And what we have now in 2026, of course, no one will ever be completely happy with the government. But what we have seen if there is a voice reason against anything that the government does, within a few hours you sew a response from the government. Including the Prime Minister and they are all part of the internet governance now in Fiji.

>> I'm from Indonesia. I will share a bit different with other countries. In my country, the government has a legitimate reason to shutdown the internet. Especially when the request is coming from the Tribe. So in Indonesia we have Tribes they request to government and internet service provider on June 2023 to shutdown the internet in three villages because there is an authority to protect their traditional belief and also to protect the youth, their youth from the negative impact of the internet.

So the government and the internet service provider comply with their requests because this request was supported by all the people in this those three villages. So in this cases, this Indonesian cases show that the government has a legitimate reason to shutdown if the people or the society in some area request it.

>> That's so interesting. And that's something I haven't heard before. And I think it boils down to autonomy and choosing to be a digital citizen and that choice always lie with the citizen. And we heard a lot. From the back, a lot of comments about the need to take this holistic political moment seriously and to do research and to do mapping and to get into the dirt of like what an internet shutdown means in terms of a digital life in terms of a economy, in terms of the human rights

and freedoms and there was also a comment or request in the chat earlier now there is a regulator in Bangladesh post the 2024 uprising how will things change for Bangladesh?

We have two questions. One what is a an internet shutdown what does it mean for digital citizen and the cost and the mapping exercise of a shutdown in that sense? The sec second is what good is legal safeguards and legal codifications do in this matter?

>> We heard from everyone in the room as well. So whether it is you are saying there's more misinformation or disinformation while the nary sieve we have to curtail it or contain the chaos as you said. That usually is the narrative that's thrown out, it's conflict, like you mentioned, or you have to contain it or slow down the spread of that information. And we see complete shutdowns and throttling. It was also mentioned or the precinct kind. And the certain zone. Whether either it's we have seen a complete shutdown a country going off grid and the happened in big occasion but from time to time we see certain areas especially with a little bit political protest they are taken off grid.

What happens in that moment? And Omor online referred to it. What happens to emergency services and what happens to people trying to reach or for example the building fell you need to know if people are okay. You need to get emergency services out there and then we've been talking about financial costs in terms of accountability. And telecom there's a revenue that a they lose out on. And there's money that even the government loses out on. And that's something that's that isn't quantified in certain reports often times the language of rights, unfortunately, is something governments don't listen to. In terms of advocacy strategies a lot of people have then said okay can we quantify economic costs because that's a language they still are open to hearing.

And in that whether it's livelihoods so for example in the Pakistani context I remember we have spoken about how right hailing apps or delivery drivers for food. It's the options the day-to-day basis from that granular level. They are impacted all the way up to all kind. So we also had when there were shutdowns and throttling of the internet the instability it creates you don't know when the internet will be shutdown. And we talked about lack of transparency. And don't see the orders.

It's indefinitely we don't know how long it will be for.

And we have seen industries lose out and Pakistan is a country where it's so uncertain they don't know if they'll be online online or if they'll be able to deliver and that work goes to other regions and you do end up losing out on the income they bring in orth. So there is a ripple effect. But how do we then transition to the law part? We have some semblance of law structure in our countries. Who can do it. Who can issue the order.

We talk about necessary proportionate, proportionality and et cetera we don't see that in practice. And then accountability. How do you hold them accountable? One side is the telecom or the service provider and the ISP. And of course like you mentioned, they are licensees and they are licensed by agreements so there's consequences for not following that's a more direct path.

We are also aware in region there's extra legal measures used against companies or the affiliates if they don't comply. And the comply with the order that's not passed to them in writing. So there's that risk assessment that also goes into it. However, at the end of the day what as an end user or a citizen primarily, how can you prevail upon them and make sure this is not (off microphone) the good thing in the room as we started this workshop even though you were asked to put on the hat of a tell com or government that role-playing was very difficult for you because you still believed it should not be done. I think that's a great place to start from.

Often times why it succeeds is when that narrative is believed, yes, it is necessary because it's a security situation, because there's something that needs to be prevented. Once you get beyond that, no, it creates more problems than the understanding you were trying to supposedly solve then we can get around to troubleshooting the problems and solutions. I want to also come back to the point where of course it was a suggested what about something that is multistakeholder and not national? The problem is that in a nation state systems we live in, national law takes precedence. Yes, we signatory treaties and all that but that comes at a later part.

What happens nationally is something that takes precedence or how do we ensure that in that national architecture the people who make the laws and implement the laws, how that accountability typically you have if you have independent cause there's some level of accountability there. And also the cases I have seen and I'm reminded back in 2013 at that time there

were a lot of terrorist attacks in the cities in Pakistan. And the narrative was to shutdown the services because terrorists use communication to plan attacks. And you see that even when you take something like that to court, against let's say over broad government action even when the law says only if last declaration of emergency or a compensation or et cetera that's when you can do something like this. That process is not fold. When that is challenged you also will have people on the bench saying yes but it's a security situation.

So people at those times you know what that political temperature is in your country. Not just to those who occupy public positions but also within society.

Because there's a level of fear and so there's, yes, it has to happen because it's for our safety. And the starting point is no, it's making us more unsafe in different ways because we can't reach. I don't think we really have solutions whether it's in law or whether with advocacy, the conversation needs to go on because this is a tremendous or the sort of switch on, switch off power that rests and is consolidated in the behinds of the state and obviously the teleco and state and despite the human rights and we talk about it in signatory. I think we as a region need to think what it is that can be done.

We have tried all the international things and we tried to local things. And we know we don't quite have a grasp nationally as well. And the consequences. But I think one good way definitely is the economic cost, the quantifying and also how does this so rebutting the all of these narratives about this is for your safety. How do you rebut that? All the economic cost to how the government loses out and how the telco lose out and find the innovative things. And of course, the intervention is not possible for everyone. That's the challenge. Okay you will have some circumvention tool that's not acceptable for every community. So you need a solution that's acceptable for all and not for some.

>> I love you are leaving on that thought and with the circumvention we have to treat the disease and not the symptom. So there's tools, apps, that can be used in internet shutdowns, chat and Briar that's out in the community and you can use without the internet if you find yourself in a precarious situation. And I've from New Delhi and we are doing this because the internet has been off for months and the thing with shutdowns it's local and domestic that international solidarity becomes difficult. What happens in Sri Lanka or Bangladesh or

Pakistan, you probably can't find common themes for you to come together and fight together on. And I will leave you with this question since this is a fundamental one of the last sessions of APrIGF and having attended almost four brilliant days of brilliant discuss, there's one thing I noted and one thing I want you to leave this room with as well. Everything we talk about in the three and a half days of APrIGF ties back to techno paternalism. What is that? When the state when consolidated with the state of technology it's our debt and it's a parent and it has to protect its citizens so it uses technology arm twist us or control us or make us behave a certain way. In India the largest cause of internet shutdowns in the last three years has been examinations.

Every time there's an exam, they cut the internet so the children don't cheat. This is something a father would do at home, trips. So this is something I want you to think a little bit about everything we are talking about in the region and the digital authoritarianism in the region and central Asia and South Asia and southeast Asian and Pacific regions and boils down to the state consolidated power through technology and centralizing that power and thinking it as a parent. And social media bans and other censorship of the youth comes from this. As long as we fight that narrative. As long as we rise above it and ask the state to view it as equal citizens in a social contract, I think incidents like this will reduce and then we can find ways to map internet shutdowns better and exchange resources and knowledge to be able to combat that as a region.

Any end thoughts from you? Thank you so much for joining. We are going to wrap this up a few minutes early and thank you for joining us for this session and I'm glad if you have if you had a god time I'm glad you had a good time and thank you online participants for your input. And thank you have a good day.

(applause)

>> Thank you very much, speakers and moderators onsite, and as well as Priya who joined us online. Next up in this room, we will have the Fellowship presentations at 11:30. So all Fellows, please be here by 11:20. And participants, please support our Fellows. They'll be sharing some insights based on what they have learned and also some issues that stay close to their heart based on the theme of the APrIGF this year. In the other room, we have another session happening as well called when cables go dark. Thank you.

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