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HEARTBEAT OF THE NATION

MYANMAR TIMES

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Myanmar tightens censorship of internet post-election

Myanmar tightens censorship of internet post-election

[John Liu](#) 17 Nov 2020



Two women browse the web on their mobile phones. Photo: Aung Htay Hlaing/The Myanmar Times

Myanmar tightens censorship of internet post-election

Myanmar’s government has ordered mobile operators to introduce filtering to censor specific keywords across the internet and block access to another three websites.

The measure to tighten online censorship was put in place days after the November 8 elections.

The directive was issued to telco operators on November 10 and involves, for the first time, the order to filter specific words, which w

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U Myo Swe, director general of Directorate of Telecommunications under the civilian government, said the instruction was requested by one of the military-controlled ministries without providing further details. He declined to name the websites blocked and keywords banned, citing confidentiality. Non-compliance would incur punishment based on the Telecommunications Law, U Myo Swe warned.

The Tatmadaw appoints and controls defence, internal affairs and border affairs ministries, a privilege guaranteed by Myanmar’s junta-crafted constitution.

Norway’s Telenor, one of Myanmar’s four telco operators, said it removed the websites “under protest” but has not complied with the filtering request.

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“We understand the intent of this is to also block any future websites containing specific keywords related to the mentioned websites,” said Jo Eikeland Roald, Telenor’s head of corporate strategy and communications.

“While the authorities of Myanmar have legal basis to order such directives, the practice appears to be incompatible with international human rights law,” Telenor Myanmar said in a statement, referring to Section 77 of the Telecommunications Law.

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There has been a push among civil society and investors to reform the Telecoms Law, which critics say lacks democratic oversight and transparency. The law allows the telecoms ministry to impose restrictions or bans in an “emergency situation” out of public interest.

Amid the coronavirus outbreak in March, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s government used Section 77 for the first time to launch a major censorship exercise, blocking over 220 websites accused of promoting pornography, child abuse and fake news. Prominent ethnic media sites like Rakhine-based Development Media Group and Narinjara were among those blocked.

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The same law was used by the government last year to impose internet restrictions on over a million people in conflict-torn Rakhine and Chin states. On October 30, it extended the ban on 3G and 4G internet services for at least a further two months.

[In September, the authorities blocked the website of Justice for Myanmar, a group of activists known for its investigations into military activities.](#)

Justice for Myanmar said the filter plan demonstrated a growing intolerance by the Myanmar authorities on freedom of expression.



“This is absolutely disturbing. Access to information and freedom of expression are basic human rights and they must be guaranteed.”

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COVID-19 Surveillance Dashboard (Myanmar)

COVID-19 Surveillance Dashboard (Myanmar) Mobile View

ဓာတ်ခွဲစစ်ဆေးသူစုစုပေါင်း (Total Specimens Tested) - 8,154,072

ပိုးတွေ့လူနာ (Lab Confirmed) - 613,238

ပိုးတွေ့သေဆုံးလူနာ (Death among Lab Confirmed) - 19,434

ပိုးတွေ့ပြန်လည်သက်သာ (Recovered)- 592,221

last updated on 24-5-2022, 8:00 PM

Abbreviation

- ဓာတ်ခွဲစစ်ဆေးသူစုစုပေါင်း

Case Count

Visualization: eHealth Unit, Department of Public Health, Ministry of Health and Sports Myanmar

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