

PRESS RELEASE

Digital Discourses: Uniting Civil Society Amidst the Pandemic



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The COVID-19 pandemic has given rise to health-based surveillance, restrictions on mobility, and the awareness that many people are less able to access the digital realm where so many human activities are now being conducted out of necessity. At the same time, Southeast Asians are experiencing a decline in their personal space, both offline and online.

In Indonesia, the personal space for citizens in the digital realm is still facing challenges due to the Electronic Information and Transactions (ITE) Law, which creates a sense of fear about expressing opinion and causes anxiety about disinformation and the spread of extremism in the digital realm. Equally alarming are rampant digital attacks aimed at vulnerable groups such as women and children as well as journalists, human rights defenders, environmental activists, and academics.

These circumstances impact the quality of digital rights—rights that should be granted to all citizens. It is imperative that civil society groups exchange ideas and collaborate with each other on initiatives concerning freedom of expression and the protection of privacy and cybersecurity.

With this background in mind, **Goethe-Institut Indonesien** together with **Southeast Asia Freedom of Expression Network (SAFEnet)** are hosting an online seminar entitled “**Digital Discourses: Uniting Civil Society Amidst the Pandemic**”. The online seminar will be held Friday 30 April 2021, from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. WIB via Zoom. The public is invited to view the online seminar by registering at bit.ly/dd-civilsociety.

The event features several speakers from Indonesia and Germany in three different sessions: 1) Mainstreaming Online Protection for Women and Girls During the COVID-19 Pandemic, 2) How to Cope with Shrinking Civic Spaces, and 3) Finding the Best Way to Regulate Hate Speech. A discussion with representatives of civil society groups working on this issue will follow in each session.

Nico Sandfuchs, Head of Information and Library Services for the Goethe-Institut Southeast Asia Region stated: “The digital transformation is producing new technologies and new opportunities at an ever-increasing speed. At the same time, these new technologies and opportunities have the potential to impact and change the civil digital space in which we live. The debate in civil society about these developments accelerated by the pandemic is an important one. We can learn much by sharing experiences from different countries and connecting civil society across borders.”

Damar Juniarto, SAFEnet Executive Director said, “Digital technology has helped everything from school to work to religious activities, particularly when human mobility is restricted in order to reduce the risk of becoming infected with the virus. But ironically, the problems caused by digital technology were not completely resolved before the pandemic occurred. Thus, in the midst of a surge in infection cases, cyber problems have exacerbated the pandemic situation. The ‘antivirus’ for this problem will be found if we engage in a dialogue to find solutions and build solidarity. That way we can strengthen ‘immunity’ to develop the needed resistance.”

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We cordially invite media representatives to view the online seminar. Media representatives who would like to join the sessions are kindly requested to register before the event to get the Zoom access link.

When: Friday, 30 April 2021, 10 a.m.–4:30 p.m. WIB

Registration: bit.ly/ddcivilsociety

For press inquiries:

Ryan Rinaldy

Public Relations Manager

Goethe-Institut Jakarta

Ryan.Rinaldy@goethe.de

[M / WA +62 878 9835 0125](tel:+6287898350125)

AGENDA

SESSION 1: MAINSTREAMING ONLINE PROTECTION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC (10 A.M.–11:30 A.M. WIB)

SPEAKERS:

- Andy Yentriyani, Chairwoman Komnas Perempuan
- Mariam Barata, Communications and Information Ministry, Director of Information Application Management
- Risyia Kori, Gender Programme Specialist UNFPA

MODERATOR: Ellen Kusuma, SAFEnet

SESSION 2: HOW TO COPE WITH SHRINKING CIVIC SPACES (1–2:30 P.M. WIB)

SPEAKERS:

- Choirul Anam, Komnas HAM Commissioner
- Herlambang P Wiratraman, Chairperson SEPAHAM
- Niklas Rakowski, PhD candidate at Weizenbaum Institut

MODERATOR: Nenden Sekar Arum, SAFEnet

SESSION 3: FINDING THE BEST WAY TO REGULATE HATE SPEECH (3–4:30 P.M. WIB)

SPEAKERS:

- Al Araf, Senior Researcher at Imparsial
- Yovantra Arief, Remotivi Executive Director
- Christina Dinar, Deputy Director at the Centre for Internet & Human Rights

MODERATOR: Anton Muhajir, SAFEnet