



FACT-FINDING MISSION: ASSESSING THE STATE OF INTERNET FREEDOM TO ENSURE MORE INCLUSIVE DEMOCRACY

September 30th-November 3rd 2023 | Dili, Timor Leste



ASEAN PARLIAMENTARIANS
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS





APHR is a regional network of current and former parliamentarians who use their unique positions to advance human rights and democracy in Southeast Asia. We seek to help create a region where people can express themselves without fear, live free from all forms of discrimination and violence, and where development takes place with human rights at the forefront.

Our members use their mandate to advocate for human rights inside and outside of parliaments, regionally and globally. They work closely with civil society, conduct fact-finding missions, and publish recommendations and opinions on the most important issues affecting the region.

APHR was born out of the recognition that human rights issues in Southeast Asia are interconnected, and from the desire of progressive legislators to work together across borders to promote and protect human rights.

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Cover page: Timor Leste

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ABOUT THE REPORT

APHR undertook a **fact-finding mission** to Timor Leste from 30th September to 3rd November 2023 to assess the country's **internet freedom**, specifically the measures it has taken to expand access for everyone and protect digital rights through strong digital literacy campaigns to tackle disinformation and hate speech. The mission seeks to engage and present recommendations for Timor-Leste's parliament, government, and key stakeholders to protect online fundamental freedoms while ensuring meaningful participation of citizens in governance and decision-making.

Three parliamentarians from the Philippines, Malaysia, and Thailand formed the Mission's delegation and visited Dili for four days to meet with the president, government officials, parliamentarians, civil society organizations, journalists, and experts. The delegates of the mission were Hon. Raoul Daniel Manuel, Member of Parliament, the Philippines; Hon. Kunthida Rungruengkiat, Former Member of Parliament, Thailand; and Hon. Gooi Hsiao Leung, Member of Penang State Legislative Assembly, Malaysia.

APHR would like to extend its special gratitude to its members who formed the mission delegation for their time and expertise to support the goals of this undertaking. Our special thanks also to all the stakeholders including the President of Timor-Leste, H.E. Jose Ramos-Horta, members of Timor-Leste National Parliament, civil society representatives, members of the press, and representatives of key government institutions such as the Provedoria dos Direitos Humanos e Justiça, Conselho de Imprensa, Autoridade Nacional de Comunicações, for taking their time to meet with the delegation to share about their work and insights on the subject matter.



INTRODUCTION

Timor-Leste's continued commitment to human rights and democracy have earned the distinction of being the only Southeast Asian country to be ranked as Free by the Freedom House's Global Freedom Index.¹ This designation is a reflection of the nation's desire to build a more and just equitable society after enduring a long history of colonization and dictatorship.²

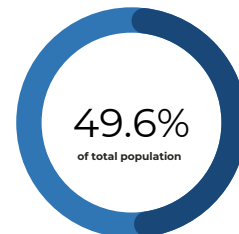


Timor-Leste's pledge to protect human rights and fundamental freedom is evident in its 2002 Constitution.³ In addition, Timor-Leste has been recognized several times by the United Nation bodies for its commitment to democracy⁴ and human rights protection.⁵

When it comes to internet freedom, however, there are areas to be improved. There is a recognition that the limited Information Communication and Technology (ICT) infrastructure is the most urgent issue as internet connectivity remains slow and expensive.

Globally, Timor-Leste is one of the few countries lacking a submarine fiber optic internet connection.⁶ As a consequence, the nation relies on satellite internet access; a service that is considerably expensive and poorer in quality.

Timor-Leste has the second highest average broadband cost in Asia with USD 107.33 per month.⁷ These issues have contributed to a low internet penetration rate in Timor-Leste. In 2022, the internet penetration is at 45% of total population,⁸ while the figure for Southeast Asia is 69%. At the start of 2023, the number rose to 49.6% or about 670.6 thousand internet users.⁹



INTRODUCTION

While Timor-Leste is addressing this issue through the fiber optics project, Timor-Leste also needs to put its attention on enhancing the digital literacy skills of its citizens.¹⁰ In 2022, online propaganda, disinformation, and hate speech became prevalent, perpetuated both by citizens and cyber-troops during the election campaign period.¹¹

Timorese youth have voiced the needs of government intervention on digital literacy to increase citizens' awareness and knowledge on digital rights, online risks, and civic education. Furthermore, they are more reluctant to speak as online engagement barely receives any attention from the authorities or the government.¹²

Fundamental freedoms is also fragile given the recent regulations introduced between 2020-2021 that may adversely impact internet freedom and infringe citizens' privacy.¹³

In 2020, the government tabled the reinstatement of the defamation Article through the revision of Timor-Leste Criminal Code.¹⁴ The Article in question protects the honor, good name, and reputation of persons and the State against media and social networks opinions that affect the dignity of those targeted. Due to public pushback, the proposed defamation law was shelved.¹⁵

In addition, a Cybercrime Bill¹⁶ was introduced in 2021 to focus on cybercrimes and the collection of evidence pertaining to such crimes.¹⁷

The Bill has been criticized for its lack of clear guidelines on data collection and retention, as well as its vague definitions of the types of crimes that warrant an investigation.

Furthermore, in January 2021 the Timorese Agency of Communication and Technology proposed draft plans for a unique ID system that would involve the gathering of citizens' personal data and biographical information.¹⁸ These proposals have raised concerns over protection of data privacy by the civil society.

Despite not being implemented, these trends demonstrate that there remains to be a looming problem regarding the sustainability of Timor-Leste's democracy. The nation's ICT capacity begs the question on how the current infrastructure can address the mounting needs to uphold online fundamental freedom. Fear of prosecution against critics remains to exist with past intimidation of journalists¹⁹ and arrests of protesters.²⁰

In June 2023, Timor-Leste successfully held its general election and elected its new parliament and Prime Minister.²¹ In a region that is witnessing a major democratic setback, it is important for parliamentarians to assess Timor-Leste's good practices in promoting and protecting fundamental freedoms.

It is also high time for parliamentarians in the region to support and ensure that the new Timor-Leste government will prioritize democratic agenda and continue to set the example in the Southeast Asia region.

KEY FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

1



Strong Constitutional and legal protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, albeit need to be updated.

2



Challenges in **internet access** and affordability.

3



Harassment against journalists, **self-censorship**, and **policing** of social media activities.

4



The need to **safeguard internet freedom** in future regulations and policies.

1 Strong Constitutional and Legal Protection

Timor-Leste's constitution establishes a framework of laws and principles that uphold the rights and freedoms of its citizens, promoting a democratic and respectful society. This commitment is enshrined in Timor-Leste's Constitution, where Article 6 states that any national laws and regulations that contradict ratified international human rights conventions, treaties, or agreements are deemed invalid. As of 2023, Timor-Leste has ratified 11 human rights conventions and protocols, including the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights.

To complement the Constitution, Timor-Leste enacted the Law No 5 /2014 on Social Communication, also known as the Media Law. The law aims to promote press freedom, and freedom of expression, and protect journalists from prosecution and harassment. It promotes and protects Press Freedom in various ways, such as prohibiting anyone, including public officials, to prevent or obstruct the circulation of information, journalist activities or equipment. Such actions are punishable under the Media Law, with possible imprisonment and fines.

The Media Law also specifically guarantees the **Right to Reply and Rectify**, empowering individuals and institutions to clarify any inaccuracies in published news or information. This provision encourages journalists, politicians, government officials, and media organizations to address disputed information openly and promptly, potentially resolving issues without resorting to the courts.

The Conselho de Imprensa

National Press Council



APHR Meeting with NPC in 2023 during Fact-Finding Mission to Timor-Leste. © APHR

The Conselho de Imprensa (CI), established in 2014 through the Media Law, is among key institutions in safeguarding fundamental freedoms. It aims to safeguard human rights, promote civic space, and independent media. The Council consists of five members; two journalists representatives and one mass media organization representative are elected and two representatives nominated by the National Parliament.

The CI has consistently demonstrated its commitment to press freedom through active monitoring, reporting, and advocacy. It publicly rejected the 2021 Cyber Crime Bill due to concerns about human rights compliance. Furthermore, they have promoted press freedom through its annual Dili Dialogue Forum and Max Stall Prize, and their rigorous ‘Right to Reply and Rectify’ campaigns.

The CI further published its media monitoring reports, highlighting several challenges including biased media coverage, limited access to balanced information online, and state-owned media’s favor in covering the ruling party.

While the Media Law provides a strong protection mechanism on journalism, the current version restricts freedom of expression Online by excluding unaccredited individuals from being protected. This includes civil society organizations, citizens, bloggers, content creators and others. Furthermore, the Law obliges journalists to serve the national interest, promote ‘national culture, values and identity’, ‘stability and harmony’.

These obligations may discourage critical and investigative journalism that threatened the state-imposed values and controlled stability. The civil society has recommended the government to revise the law, in order to comply more with international human rights standards and principles.²²

2 Challenges in Internet Access and Affordability

The main challenge of internet freedoms in Timor-Leste largely concerns the limited access of the internet and its accessibility. The exorbitant costs ultimately created a stark digital divide among Timorese communities, where access to information and communication became a privilege.

The high cost of the internet in Timor-Leste, exceeding \$100 per year, creates a digital divide where access becomes a privilege instead of a basic necessity.²³ This cost has placed Timor-Leste, along with Hong Kong and Bhutan, as among the countries with highest internet costs in Asia.



An East Timorese street vendor waits for customers for his second hand mobile phone on a street side market in Dili, Timor Leste.
© EFE/ANTONIO DASIPARU



This disproportionately impacts low-income communities struggling in a country with a per capita income of only \$1674.72 USD.²⁴ There are three major telecommunication companies dominating the market in Timor-Leste, namely the Timor Telecom, Telkomcel, and Telemor, that provide internet services to Timorese.

This concentration of control gives these companies significant influence over the quality and cost of internet services, and limits the capacity for other smaller ISPs to effectively compete in the free market. This has ultimately impacted the overall development of the digital infrastructure and economy in Timor-Leste.

Civil society organizations, academes, and journalists, have expressed the lack of accountability and transparency of these companies in terms of the quality of internet speed they provide. A growing number of Timorese are expressing concern about the discrepancy between the promised internet speeds and their actual experiences.

Concerns have also been voiced about the lack of transparency regarding the companies' financial performance, such as profits and taxes, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic where internet access. Furthermore, telecommunication companies have limited transparency regarding their profits and taxes, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, a period where the telecommunication companies have experienced significant profit increases. It was also noted that the companies' reports since 2020 are not available to the public.

The high cost of internet packages also leads to a wide digital divide among Timorese. Access to the internet and communication lines remains unevenly distributed, with urban populations enjoying significantly greater access compared to their rural counterparts. Furthermore, high-speed internet access often comes at a premium, further limiting access for those in low-income communities and rural areas, including even marginalized neighborhoods within the capital city of Dili.

MEDIA AND DIGITAL LITERACY



The Fact-Finding Mission highlights the vital role of government intervention in fostering media and digital literacy in Timor-Leste. Increasing and strengthening media and digital literacy efforts emerged as a key recommendation agreed among all stakeholders. As Timor-Leste expands its internet infrastructure, the importance of media and digital literacy has never been greater.

Beyond mere access, digital literacy empowers individuals to navigate the complexities of the online space safely, responsibly, and effectively. However, efforts must extend beyond ordinary citizens. Promotion of media and digital literacy is crucial for a diverse range of actors, including the police, military, government officials, and political parties. Equipping these institutions with the necessary skills is vital to ensure they uphold online fundamental freedoms while guaranteeing public safety.

3 Harassment Against Journalists, Self-Censorship, and Policing of Social Media Activities

In Timor-Leste, a self-censorship culture grows rapidly among journalists and citizens as they face harassment, intimidation, and legal proceedings. With limited access and sources, journalists, alongside rights defenders and citizens, face significant obstacles in using news and reports to expose and challenge injustices.

While Timor-Leste's high ranking on the Press Freedom Index may suggest otherwise, journalists and civil society organizations highlighted a gap between the index and the reality on the ground.²⁵ The index primarily focuses on the imprisonment of journalists, a situation not currently present in Timor-Leste but journalists still face a wide range of challenges that impact their work, including harassment and intimidation from authorities and political figures, as well as restrictions on access to information imposed by government officials.

This has been claimed to pose a significant obstacle, especially when attempting to investigate and report on sensitive topics such as sexual harassment involving powerful individuals, corruption, and other critical issues.

The fear of intimidation not only leads journalists to practice self-censorship, but also impacts internet users.



The fear of intimidation not only leads journalists to practice self-censorship, but also impacts internet users. Journalists start to limit their publications, favor writing ‘friendly’ news, and shy away from critical and investigative journalism that might expose injustices committed by politicians and religious figures. This fear extends to activists and human rights defenders, who worry about being labeled ‘red-tagged’ by certain politicians and groups. As a result, many people choose to remain anonymous or use additional anonymous accounts to express their opinions and criticisms freely.

During the Fact-Finding Mission, the mission delegates discussed such challenges voiced by Timorese journalists with the Conselho de Imprensa (National Press Council, CI). The CI discussed its program with the Timor-Leste government named “Meet the Press” - a monthly basis program that serves as a forum for journalists and media to discuss issues on press freedom with the Secretary of State of Social Communication, and other invited government officials.

The CI also recognized the need to strengthen the authorities’ knowledge on Media Law, particularly the Right to Reply and Rectify, to prevent intimidation and prosecution of journalists. A new initiative is underway to address the issue, the CI is in the process of setting up a Memorandum of Understanding with the General Prosecutor to impose a new mechanism on cases related to journalists. The CI will assume the role of a mediator, and any case related to journalists will be mediated by the CI.

Another concerning finding of the Fact-Finding Mission is the swift action by the police in identifying and arresting anonymous and identified social media accounts expressing opinions or criticisms of certain politicians. During the Roundtable Discussion, some civil society organizations reported that police officers have allegedly created their own anonymous accounts to monitor online communication, targeting specific users. Despite requiring mandatory court authorization for data access, authorities appear capable of identifying individuals behind social media accounts. The tools and method on how this was done by authorities remained unanswered.



THE CASE OF **Ela Variana**



Ela Variana speaking in a forum in Timor-Leste
© ARQUIVO PESSOAL

In July 2023, women activist Ela Variana was arbitrarily arrested by the National Police on Scientific Investigation for a Facebook comment misinterpreted as threatening Prime Minister Xanana Gusmão. The police quickly acted on the case without sufficient legal justification.

Despite the absence of a police report from the alleged victim, Prime Minister Xanana Gusmão, the police quickly acted on the case by arbitrarily arresting Ela Variana. Variana also received various online harassment and bullying, with citizens labeling her as a generation of militia or the paramilitary group that supported the Indonesian military regime.

Now, Variana is filing a lawsuit against the police for false accusations, illegal arrest, and intimidation. If successful, Variana will be the first Timorese to successfully sue the state, especially the police, for such actions.²⁶

4 Safeguarding Internet Freedom in Future Regulations and Policies

While the constitution guarantees fundamental freedoms, the government is considering a series of laws that may undermine these rights. Civil society has voiced strong opposition to these proposals and has put forward recommendations for safeguarding fundamental freedoms.

In 2020, Timor-Leste's Ministry of Justice proposed the reintroduction of a criminal defamation law, aiming to protect "offenses against honor, good name and reputation."²⁷ This move, while not entirely new as similar attempts were made in the past, faced significant opposition from civil society organizations, journalists, and the human rights institutions. The CI publicly issued a formal position, stating that they 'disagree on the criminalization and offenses' that the bill proposed. Concerns arose that the law was intentionally designed to suppress criticism of politicians and journalists, shielding powerful elites from transparency and accountability.

This proposed law came amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, a period marked by economic hardship, increased inequality, and widespread social unrest. With the internet becoming a key platform for activism and expression, frustrations were channeled into social media, leading to criticism, insults, and the spread of disinformation. This online environment, while fostering democratic ideals, also saw an increase in hate speech, online violence, bullying, and harassment. This rise in online criticism and insults directed at politicians and public officials likely contributed to their push for the defamation law.

In 2021, two bills were presented in the parliament, namely the Cyber Crime and Data Privacy Bill. These proposals sparked concerns among the public, especially journalists, activists, and human rights defenders for its lack of human rights safeguards. The Cyber Crime Bill came with the need for a stronger cyber security legal framework as the country attempts to expand its digital access and penetration.²⁸ It was previously claimed that the Cyber Crime Bill would focus solely on the technical aspects of internet infrastructure to prevent the increasing risks of cyber crimes.



Students and activists shout slogans during a protest against the government's plan to restore the criminal defamation law outside the parliament building in Dili, Timor-Leste, 03 August 2020
© EPA/ANTONIO DASIPARU



Students and activists shout slogans during a protest against the government's plan to restore the criminal defamation law outside the parliament building in Dili, Timor-Leste, 03 August 2020. © EPA/ANTONIO DASIPARU

During the Fact-Finding Mission, it also appeared that government institutions highlighted the concerns over the absence of legal framework for government and ISPs to censor, block, or surveil prohibited contents such as pornography and gambling. These concerns contributed to the push of the Bill.

Civil society organizations however, have argued that the Bill would inevitably impact freedom of expression. Specifically, it has been criticized for its vague terms of law, lack of clarity on data collection, and the absence of data destruction provisions. The ease of obtaining warrants for investigations further amplifies these concerns and potentially allows for arbitrary surveillance.

These concerns have amounted to serious concerns among civil society organizations about potential state surveillance, and the chilling effect on freedom of expression through self-censorship.

The Fact-Finding Mission also found that human rights institutions were not involved in the drafting of this Bill, such as the Provedoria dos Direitos Humanos e Justiça (Ombudsman for Human Rights and Justice, PDHJ) and National Press Council.

This lack of transparency further fueled concerns about the potential misuse of the law for sweeping censorship and surveillance.

As the Bill stems from the need to establish a legal basis for network interference, censorship, and surveillance, the past draft has shown that it lacks human rights safeguards to prevent the law from being abused.

Another proposed Bill put forward in 2021 is the Data Privacy Bill. The Fact-Finding Mission however found a limited focus on data privacy and protection among stakeholders, with the majority advocating for a centralized data management system to digitize government systems and public administration.²⁹

Protection of data privacy has been generally recognized by the Timor-Leste Constitution. Article 38 among others, guarantees citizens of their rights to data privacy and prohibits the processing of personal data without their consent.

However, existing laws, such as Law No.15/2012 on Regulation of Telecommunications Sector have posed some implications on data privacy as they require citizens to submit personal data, such as national identification cards, and other potentially sensitive data.³⁰

As shown by the trends of harassment by authorities, there is a growing concern about the protection of data submitted by citizens to telecommunications companies. The current government has an opportunity to address stakeholder concerns and revise these Bills to ensure robust protection of fundamental freedoms.



LAW No. 15/2012 on Regulation of Telecommunications

have posed some implications on **data privacy** as they require citizens to submit personal data, such as national identification cards, and other potentially sensitive data.

CONCLUSION

Timor-Leste's commitment to democracy and human rights remain strong, but the current development presents certain challenges. Timor-Leste's growing internet infrastructure necessitates regulations and control measures.

Ensuring that these measures are enacted and implemented with **robust human rights safeguards** is crucial to upholding the values that underpin Timor-Leste's progress. Furthermore, prioritizing affordable and reliable internet access for all its citizens is vital for ensuring inclusive and equitable participation in the digital age.

Fostering media and digital literacy is critical to empower and protect individuals from threats and risks in cyberspace. By equipping both citizens and the authorities with digital literacy skills, Timor-Leste can promote a safer and more inclusive online environment, ultimately safeguarding the democratic progress the country has achieved.



APHR Meeting with the House Speaker and Members of the Timor-Leste National Parliament on 2nd October 2023. © APHR

RECOMMENDATIONS

TO THE GOVERNMENT OF TIMOR-LESTE

- **Invest in infrastructure development** by allocating significant government investment in expanding the national digital infrastructure, particularly in rural areas;
- **Develop national ICT strategies** aim at fostering an open market and competition in telecommunications services market;
- **Enact and implement an inclusive nation-wide digital literacy** programs, ensuring women, children, and rural communities participation;
- **Support civil society efforts in campaigns against negative effects of the internet**, such as hate speech, gender-based violence, disinformation, and misinformation;
- **Increase capacity building programs on democracy and fundamental freedoms** for security sectors authorities;
- Strongly urge and call upon the authorities to **cease harassment and intimidation** directed at the press, civil society, human rights defenders;
- Ensure that all cyber related legislations **align with international human rights standards**.

The Government Palace in Dili, the capital city of East Timor
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RECOMMENDATIONS

TO THE NATIONAL PARLIAMENT OF TIMOR-LESTE

- **Secure and prioritize an adequate public funds** to support human rights institutions and human rights education, particularly media and digital literacy efforts for citizens, government officials, and authorities;
- In revising the Cyber Crime and Data Privacy Bills, **ensure robust human rights safeguards to be incorporated**, which includes but not limited to, clear and precise definitions of offenses, strong oversight mechanisms of authorization, transparent data retention and destruction provisions, and mechanisms for independent review and accountability;
- **Conduct a comprehensive review of the Media Law** to ensure comprehensive protection for journalistic activities, encompassing freelance and non-accredited journalists;
- **Evaluate the impact of Article 285 of the Penal Code on Slanderous Denunciation**, analyzing its implementation in practice and considering past instances of its misuse to intimidate journalists;
- **Actively engage and involve civil society and human rights institutions** throughout the drafting of any legislation impacting internet freedom, which includes holding public consultations, hearings, and incorporating recommendations into the final draft;
- **Promote responsible online discourse** by enacting and encouraging digital literacy initiatives and awareness campaigns;
- **Create a safe and open environment for the public** to peacefully express their political opinions, including critics, comments, and disapprovals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

TO THE PROVIDOR FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND JUSTICE

- **Develop comprehensive and inclusive media and digital rights training, literacy, and internet freedom programs** for the 2025-2028 National Strategic Plan to anticipate the potentially rapid development of Timor-Leste's internet infrastructure;
- **Advocate for a comprehensive digital rights legislation and policies** that protects online fundamental freedoms;
- **Advance for legislative reforms** to strengthen press freedom and ensure journalists can work without fear of reprisals;
- **Investigate allegations of data privacy violations** by authorities and telecommunication companies to ensure accountability and oversight of data access.

TO THE NATIONAL PRESS COUNCIL

- **Increase facilitation of dialogues on press freedom issues** between journalists, media outlets, and government officials;
- **Enhance collaboration with the justice and security sectors** to promote awareness of the Right to Reply and Rectify as effective dispute resolution mechanisms;
- **Provide and implement training programs for journalists** on digital security and legal rights to protect them from intimidation and harassment;
- **Engage in joint initiatives** with the government, security, and political sectors to bolster understanding and respect for press freedom, including the protections guaranteed by the Constitution;
- **Advance the reform of Media Law** to ensure thorough protection for journalistic activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

TO THE AUTORIDADE NACIONAL DE COMUNICAÇÕES AND MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

- **Engage with the civil society** communities, academe, and journalists, in drafting of policies on digital activities, taking into account human rights standards and impacts;
- **Publicly and regularly disclose progress reports** on the fiber optic cable project, detailing its actual progress and addressing any challenges or delays;
- **Promote market competition** and encourage the entry of new telecommunication companies to foster competition and drive down prices;
- **Establish a consumer protection framework** that allows citizens to file complaints related to internet service quality and data privacy concerns;
- **Enforce service quality standards** to telecommunication companies for internet speed, latency, and data usage to ensure quality of service;
- **Conduct and publish regular audits and investigations** of telecommunication companies to ensure compliance with regulations and address any instances of unfair practices or anti-competitive behavior;
- **Require telecommunication companies to publicly disclose their service performance matrix**, including data speeds, prices, profits, and tax;
- **Mandate telecommunication companies to regularly publish their financial reports**, including profits, taxes, and network investment, to promote accountability and transparency;
- **Ensure affordability and inclusivity of internet services**, including implementing policies targeted for marginalized communities to help bridge the digital divide.

RECOMMENDATIONS

TO THE CIVIL SOCIETY, JOURNALISTS, AND ACADEME

1. **Engage and empower communities** to advocate for their digital rights through collaborative initiatives between civil society and media organizations;
2. **Promote the inclusion and participation of women and girls** in the digital rights movement to amplify their voices and needs;
3. **Develop and disseminate educational materials and resources** on digital rights in Tetum and other local languages to ensure inclusivity;
4. **In collaboration with the government**, provide assistance to capacity building and awareness raising programs for government officials on democracy and internet freedom;
5. **Provide recommendations with specific action points and policies** that promote affordable and accessible internet access for all citizens;
6. **Advocate for transparency and accountability** on government data, ensuring accessible and timely access of information.



APHR Fact-Finding Mission to Timor Leste in 2023. © APHR

MEMBERS

OF THE MISSION



Hon. Kunthida Rungruengkiat

Former Member of Parliament of Thailand
Member of APhR

Kunthida Rungruengkiat is an academic and a politician. She was a member of parliament and the deputy leader of the Future Forward Party. Her policy portfolio includes education reform and early childhood education improvement. After the disbandment of the Future Forward Party by the Constitutional Court, she faces a 10 years ban from contesting in any election. She is currently the director of Progressive Movement Foundation working for the local administration of Progressive Movement candidates for better early childhood education. Her projects include children's books fundraising, teacher and parent training for municipalities.



Hon. Raoul Dannel Manuel

Member of the Philippines House of Representatives
Member of APhR

Raoul Manuel is a Member of the Philippines House of Representatives on behalf of the Kabataan (Youth) Party-list, the first and only national youth party in Philippine Congress. He is a member of 31 out of 79 House committees, including the Committee on Human Rights, Committee on Information and Communications Technology, and Committee on Youth and Sports Development. Prior to being a lawmaker, Raoul was selected as Student Regent: the sole student representative to the Board of Regents of University of the Philippines (UP), the national university of the country. He also served as president of the National Union of Students of the Philippines (NUSP), the broadest and longest-existing alliance of Filipino student councils and governments.



Hon. Gooi Hsiao Leung

Member of the Penang State Legislative Assembly for Bukit Tengah
Member of APhR

Gooi Hsiao Leung is a Member of the Penang State Legislative Assembly for Bukit Tengah since May 2018. He also served as the Member of Parliament (MP) for Alor Setar from May 2013 to May 2018. He is a member of the People's Justice Party (PKR), a component party of the Pakatan Harapan (PH). Gooi has pursued his passion for human rights defending clients both locally and overseas, where he worked for the United Nations at the Special Panels and Serious Crimes Unit in East Timor.

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