



**DIGITAL RIGHTS  
REPORT 2022**

Months before the turn of 2022, Filipinos already had a sense of what was coming for them. The campaign for the national elections were just starting then, and like any elections before this, the nation was split apart by controversies and false promises. The former president Rodrigo Duterte's term was coming to an end too, but Filipinos were already aware that they will have to live with his bloody legacy for years to come.

Coming from his administration marked with violence, disinformation, and lack of transparency, the 2022 elections—which was arguably the defining moment of the year—was a period of unrest. As candidates clashed for their bid to power, Filipinos were caught in the stream of hateful propaganda, false information, and power tripping. And as politicians wielded the digital space to boost their campaigns, the Filipino internet became a hostile place to exercise free speech, maintain privacy, and protect oneself from abuse.

This edition of the **Digital Rights Report** from the **Foundation for Media Alternatives** documented the events, trends, and changes that had transpired in the digital space over the course of 2022. Building on the previous annual reports, this paper aims to offer a picture of the internet, both local and global and however torn apart by hate speech, disinformation disorder, and poor infrastructure, so Filipinos can come up with ways to move forward and build an equitable online space for all.

## Executive Summary

Before President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. assumed the top seat in the government, Duterte intensified his clampdown against the press. The news media outlet Rappler and its owner Maria Ressa were the subjects of Duterte's vitriolic rants and threats. The former president's false accusations did not only smear Rappler and Ressa's reputation, but also tainted the public's trust in news. Lacking the public's support, the media community became more vulnerable to harassment, censorship, and violence. In 2022, the websites of alternative media outlets Altermidya and Bulatlat were taken down by repeated cyberattacks. Several journalists also raised alarm for receiving death threats for doing their job. Despite these challenges, the journalists were joined by media advocates in resisting censorship, which included campaigning for the decriminalization of libel.

Elon Musk's takeover of Twitter also imperiled freedom of speech online. Brazenly showing partiality towards right-wing views, Twitter users who identify with marginalized groups became subjects of ridicule and hate speech. Transgenders and queer people noticed a rise in the unrestricted use of slurs, and the boosting of tweets propagating LGBTQIA+ hate on the platform.

At the height of the elections, women candidates were held down by misogynistic remarks. Coupled with the rise of digital technology aiding in disinformation, then-presidential candidate Leni Robredo was targeted with fake scandals and rumors, which were obviously attempts to discredit and frame her as an incompetent woman for the job. Even the former president's daughter Sara Duterte was not safe from misogyny, having often received backlash and mockery for her appearance. Amid this unchecked online misogyny, the Foundation for Media Alternatives recorded cases of online gender-based violence and was able to log 61 domestic cases last year, and one international case. FMA lauded the passing of the Anti-Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children (OSAEC) bill into law and the widening of the scope of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act, which now includes the online social networks and e-commerce outfits involved in trafficking women.

When Marcos Jr. began his work as the new president, the first bill he signed into law was the controversial SIM Card Registration bill. Before the year ended, its implementation was greenlit despite the public's opposition. FMA, along with other digital rights advocates, have raised concerns about how this law can normalize surveillance and imperil the user's sensitive information, among others. Several months into the implementation of the law too, registrants complained of glitches and errors. The government's refusal to address these concerns led individuals and advocacy groups to file a petition before the Supreme Court to declare this law unconstitutional. Another data privacy issue that should concern Filipinos is the flawed implementation and rollout of the National ID or PhilSys. Several years have passed since its implementation and Filipinos are still yet to receive copies of their PhilSys ID.



# Freedom of Expression

## Press Freedom Under Siege

The year 2022 has been a challenging year for the nation's democracy. The state's constant attacks to curb the Filipino's freedom of expression were relentless, especially in the tail-end of former president Rodrigo Duterte's term. Since he won the presidency, he has maligned news outfits and red-tagged journalists, a series of harassment that cost media workers' jobs and lives. This full-on war against press freedom cultivated the public's distrust in media outlets, which exacerbated disinformation and misinformation in the country.

After successfully shutting down ABS-CBN, the biggest broadcasting network in the country, in 2020, Duterte proceeded to harass Maria Ressa and threaten her news platform, Rappler. Various allegations were thrown towards her and Rappler from 2017 up to 2022, with the primary accusations being the media company's foreign ownership and Ressa's tax violation. While Rappler provided evidence that they are a 100 percent Filipino-owned company, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) moved to revoke the license of the news site in 2018. The SEC still upholds this decision as of writing. Meanwhile, after a string of charges, Ressa and Rappler have been acquitted from tax violations in 2023. Ressa's cyber libel case, which she was convicted of in 2020, however, is yet to be overturned.

Six years under Duterte strained the country's press freedom. For six consecutive years, the Philippines slipped one notch each year in the Reporter Without Borders' (RSF) World Press Freedom Index. In 2022, the RSF described the last few moments of Duterte's term as "marked by countless verbal attacks coupled with judicial harassment targeting any media deemed overly critical of the government." The organization also flagged how trolls tried to disempower alternative media sites, such as Altermidya and Bulatlat, through repeated cyberattacks.

Despite this bleak media landscape, the country celebrated its first National Press Freedom Day. Signed into law in April 2022, Duterte declared the 30th of August of every year shall be commemorated in honor Marcelo Del Pilar, the father of Philippine journalism. Notwithstanding this obvious pretension, news outlets, journalists, and media workers grabbed the opportunity to expose the real state of democracy in the country through statements, talks, and events. They also reiterated their campaigns to release journalists who remain in jail and hold to account the murderers behind slain journalists. Since 2016, Freedom for Media for All has tallied 281 incidents of harassment towards journalists up to 2022. Under Duterte's regime, a total of 23 journalists were also killed, while some were slapped with trumped-up charges of illegal possession of firearms and cyberlibel.

## Threatening Online Free Speech

Ever since its existence, social media platforms have been known to be a double-edged sword. They open up possibilities for civic engagement and awareness, but they can erode it too. In 2022, technocrat Elon Musk successfully bought Twitter with the promise he will make free speech free again. But free speech for Musk meant leaving abuse and hate speech unchecked, and allowing the silencing of minority voices.

Believing that the platform had a left-wing bias, Musk reinstated conservative public figures who were suspended for inciting violence, racist remarks, among others. While he provided a platform to right-wing figures, Musk removed multiple journalists from the site for criticizing his actions. He also notoriously filtered and deboosted tweets and direct messages containing certain words such as "transgender," "trans," "gay," and "bisexual", while anti-LGBT slurs were not flagged.

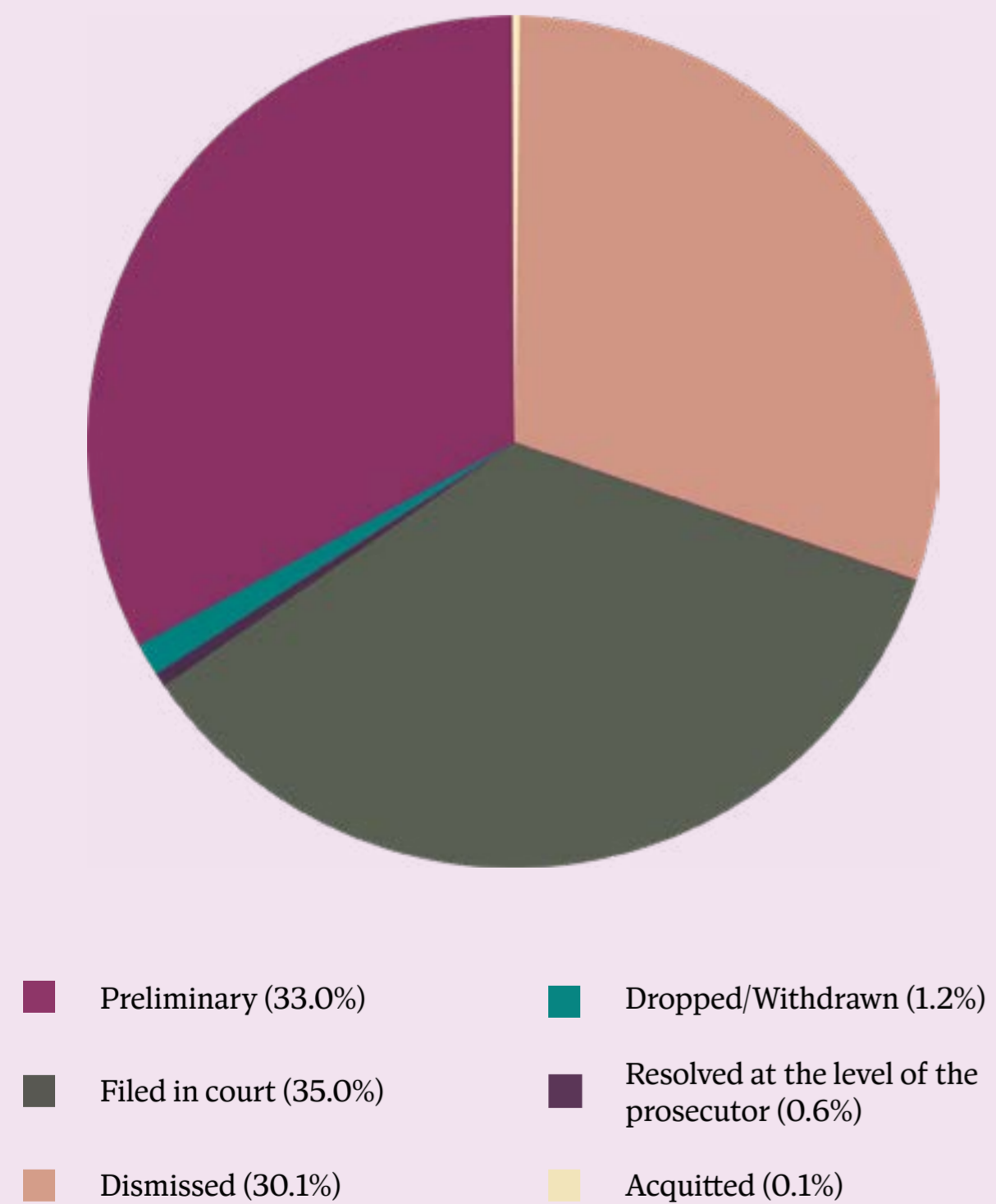
## Liberating Free Speech

Seeing how the law is being weaponized by authorities to curb dissent, some lawmakers set out to protect the Filipinos' right to expression. In December 2022, Senator Risa Hontiveros proposed to

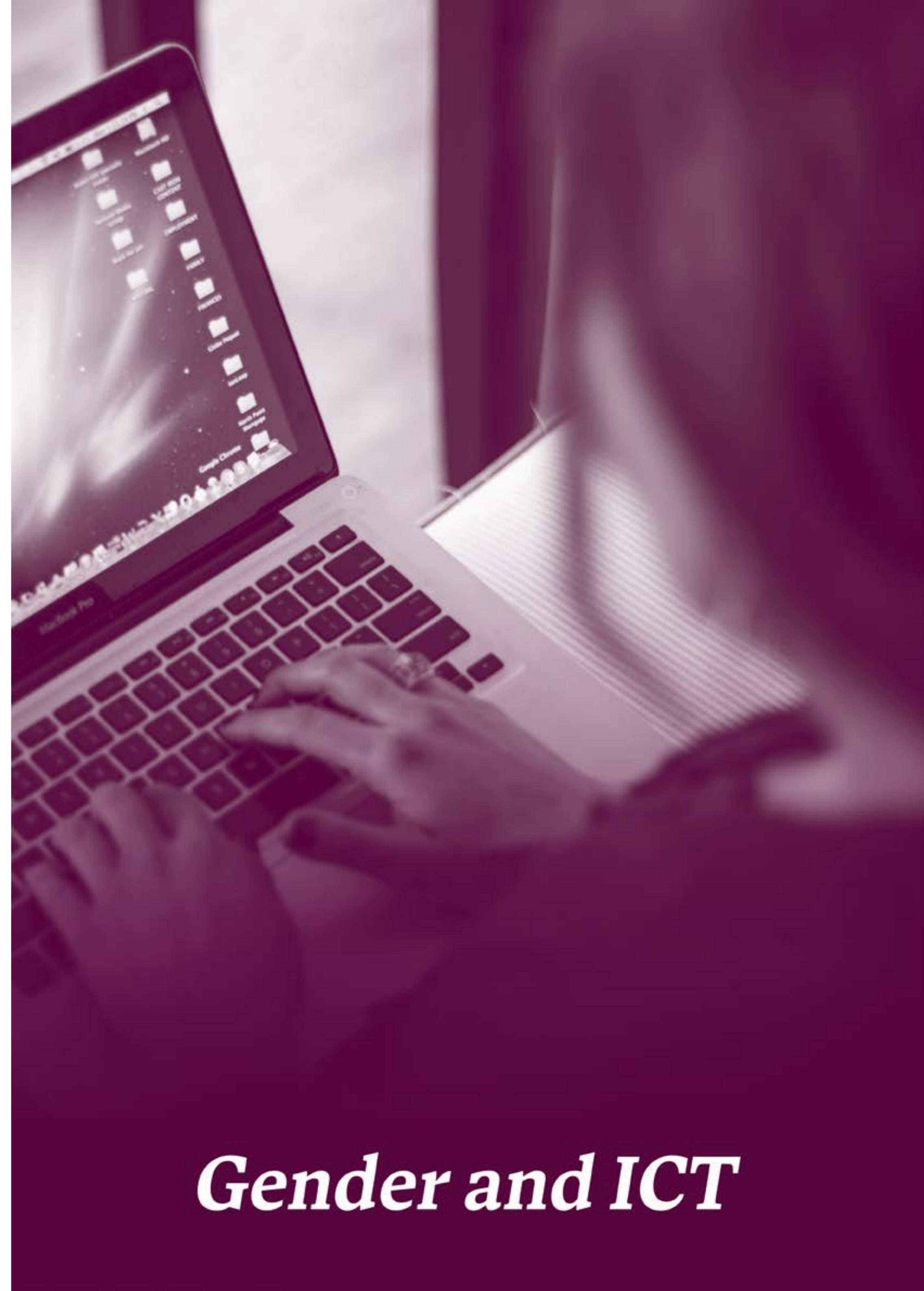
decriminalize cyberlibel. “These journalists have wasted years of their lives facing charges for basically doing their jobs. Gamit na gamit na ang cyber libel para patahimikin ang ating mga mamamahayag. Kung hindi natin maiwasto ito, patuloy na gagamitin ang libel para kitilin ang ating kalayaan,” Hontiveros said.

The senator acknowledged the importance of the press especially amid the stream of unverified and false information. The campaign for the decriminalization of cyberlibel has been going on for three decades. While fellow lawmakers showed support, the bill’s passage remains to be seen. In 2022, it was found that despite the high volume of filed cyber libel cases, only one percent of the cases were resolved. Most of the cases were either dismissed, withdrawn, or archived (see figure below). Though this statistic showed the flaw of the law and our justice system, it can also point to how the current law is being used to intimidate journalists and other truth-tellers into silence.

**Status of cyberlibel cases**



Source: Rappler | <https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/in-depth/decriminalize-philippines-junked-cyber-libel-cases-since-2012/>



# Gender and ICT

## Misogyny Hounded National Elections

The national elections were not easy for everybody, but women candidates had it worse. Six years under Duterte normalized a culture of sexism and misogyny among the public, placing more pressure on women to conform to flawed societal standards.

Former vice president Leni Robredo was the lone woman candidate for presidency in 2022, and her electoral bid was mocked and belittled by her opponents and their supporters. She and her daughters were targets of malicious attacks ranging from fabricated scandals, sexist comments and memes. Her campaign speeches were also distorted to skew her reputation. Many people might have tried to derail her campaign, but with her supporter's support, Robredo remained the top contender against Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

The daughter of Duterte, Sara Duterte, who ran and eventually won the vice presidency, did not have it easy either. Her masculine public image was the main subject of ridicule, but she was also derided for being a woman who wanted a post in the national government.

Motivated by a strong gender bias, Filipino online users, especially those on Facebook, created hateful sexist posts and comments not only towards these two candidates, but to their supporters as well. This made the platform difficult to navigate and discouraged a healthy political engagement on the site.

The recent national election proved how gendered disinformation pushes women out of the political arena. It undermines their credibility and wrongfully represents them as incompetent, untrustworthy, and too emotional to do the job. When in reality, women have been outperforming their gender counterparts in political leadership. Growing gendered disinformation also disincentivises young women who want a career in politics all the while curbing women's civic responsibility to engage in political discourses.

## Continued Rise in Online Gender-Based Violence

Online gender-based violence (OGBV) ran rampant in 2022. The FMA logged 61 domestic cases of OGBV last year, and one international case. Majority of victim-survivors reported that they suffered online harassment and abuse in the form of taking intimate photos, videos, and other private information; posting violent remarks, abusive comments; online sexual exploitation and abuse of children.

Notwithstanding this high number, the idea that gender-motivated harassment and abuse can happen online remains to be an impossible concept to many. Crafted bills and passed laws, however, acknowledge this phenomenon and endeavor to enjoin the public in raising awareness and combating it. First of these laws is the Safe Spaces Act which explicitly addresses any form of gender-based harassment in online spaces, from physical abuse to using abusive and discriminating language.

But since the COVID-19 pandemic fast-track digitalization, many children are now prematurely exposed to the dangers of the internet as well. According to a study by UNICEF, ECPAT International, and Interpol, there is approximately 2 million Filipino children aged 12-17 who have been sexually abused and exploited online in 2022.

Fortunately, on July 2022, the Anti-Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children (OSAEC) bill lapsed into law, demanding social media platforms and internet service providers to step up efforts against online sexual abuse of children. The law boasts of a stricter punishment for violators who publish, distribute, and stream online materials of child sex abuse. Online grooming, the act of building rapport with a minor to manipulate and exploit them, is penalized by the law as well. The law also repealed Section 4(c)(1) or the cybersex provision of RA 10175 otherwise known as the Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012.

As more people use the internet, several laws were also amended to keep cybercrimes' evolving nature in check, one of which is the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act. The Senate moved to strengthen this measure in 2022, expanding the law's scope to include punishment for internet platforms mediating the crime. This amendment covers online social networks and e-commerce outfits involved in trafficking women.



# Privacy and Data Protection

## Resisting SIM Card Registration

The concept of privacy may come as foreign to the general public, but last year gave Filipinos a glimpse into how their personal information is susceptible to scamming and hacking. Incidents of smishing, the act of sending fraudulent texts to extract a person's sensitive information, significantly increased in 2022. While receiving bogus messages is a fairly common experience among Filipinos, the torrent of unsolicited texts came with the user's legal name, revealing that the people behind the act have access to Filipinos' data. A blatant violation to one's right to privacy, the rise of smishing recalled the clamor for the previously vetoed SIM Card Registration Bill; and upon taking over the presidency, now-president Ferdinand Marcos Jr. promptly signed it into law in October 2022.

Prior to this, FMA has constantly campaigned against mandatory SIM card registration. Citing its compounding and intersectional effects on constitutionally protected rights, FMA, alongside other digital rights activists, asserted the law's flaws and history of inefficiency. Notwithstanding the public's opposition to the law, it came into full effect in December 2022 with the following measures:

- Before selling SIM cards, telco companies and direct sellers are required to ask for a valid identification document.
- Registering a SIM card with false or fictitious information, using fictitious identities, or carrying out fraudulent activities will be subject to appropriate penalties.
- In case of a subpoena or court order, telcos must give out SIM card owners' full names and addresses.
- People with SIM cards already need to register with telcos within a certain time frame. SIM cards will be deactivated if you don't.
- Subscriber SIM cards must be kept on file by telecommunications companies. A list of authorized dealers and agents nationwide must be submitted quarterly to the National Telecommunications Commission by companies.
- Telcos may be asked by law enforcement agencies to look up the owner of a SIM card

Source: <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1677723/fwd-marcos-jr-signs-into-law-sim-card-registration-act>

When the law's implementing rules and regulations were being drafted, digital rights groups asserted that SIM Card Registration in other countries failed to stem cybercrimes. Jamael Jacob, legal advisor of the Foundation for Media Alternatives and former head of the National Privacy Commission's Privacy Unit, asserted that people behind smishing and other crimes can quickly render SIM card registries ineffective by choosing different delivery mechanisms.

"Once they do that, all that's left is another massive state-sanctioned database that contains millions of pieces of personal identification information," Jacob wrote. "Such databases are not only expensive to maintain but become honeypots for hackers and others to exploit."

The rollout of various telcos' registration processes took place in the first half of 2023, but failed to meet its quota of registrants by the first deadline in April. The deadline for registration was moved to July 25 even though the DICT initially announced that there will be no extension. This and the fact that the registration process was plagued by glitches put into question the effectiveness of the law's implementation.

As of writing, the mandatory SIM Card Registration is yet to deliver on its promise of countering cybercrimes. FMA has published an initial assessment of the law, reviewing its implementation so far (see table on next page).

| Promise   | Prophecy/Warning (from 2018 briefing paper)   | Reality   |
|---|---|---|
| SIM card registration will address the proliferation of text-based scams.   | See below   | <p>Scammers and other criminals use other methods for sending spam and phishing messages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use of SIM cards bought abroad</li> <li>• use of messaging/chat platforms</li> <li>• use of other online platforms (e.g., SMS showing email addresses as sources instead of mobile numbers)</li> </ul> <p>Scammers take advantage of the registration process to introduce new scams (e.g., offering SIM registration assistance):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Globe warned its subscribers against offers of SIM registration assistance online and advised them not to share their personal data.</li> <li>• The NTC came up with a warning reminding people that the registration process is free of charge, and anyone who claims otherwise is likely engaged in fraud.</li> <li>• The National Privacy Commission (NPC) also cautioned the public against the spread of emails and text messages containing fake instructions and links on how to register their SIM cards.</li> </ul> |
| SIM card registration will be useful in deterring crime   | The theory that SIM card registration is a boon for law enforcement has been consistently debunked across jurisdictions. The experiences of many countries (e.g., Pakistan, Canada, Mexico – see 2018 briefing paper) have demonstrated numerous ways through which criminals are able to circumvent this type of regulation. In some regions, registration actually increased the prevalence of some crimes and even facilitated the emergence of black markets.   | There is burgeoning trade involving pre-registered SIM cards (i.e., using fake or stolen identities) as evidenced by at least two police sting operations that managed to catch the sellers   |
| SIM card registration will be implemented easily because (1) implementing government agencies are ready and have the capacity for it; and (2) Filipino citizens are willing and are able to register. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A SIM registration system would require considerable information infrastructure that should be able to handle numerous sources of data</li> <li>• Logistical practicalities in the registration process should also be considered. A huge portion of the population, especially among the marginalized groups, do not have existing valid identification documents, and requiring such for SIM card registration is bound to increase applications for government-issued identification. And then, there is the availability of equipment and physical capacity of the government and telcos to process registration.</li> </ul> | <p>Technical issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After it registered around 20,000 subscribers, Globe made its registration portal temporarily inaccessible. It claimed to have discovered “potential minor vulnerabilities” that required “careful patching in order to prevent any serious threat to customer data”.</li> <li>• Smart’s registration portal also experienced heavy traffic during the first day of registration</li> </ul> <p>Low turnout:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On April 25, even after several earlier statements denying the need to extend the April 26 deadline, the government—through the Department of Justice—announced a 90-day extension. It was supposedly spurred by the appeal of the telcos, which noted that less than 50% of the country’s total active 168 million SIMs had been registered. [NOTE: The accuracy of this figure is in doubt given the ability of bad actors to sell pre-registered SIM cards)</li> </ul>  |

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <p>SIM card registration will promote financial inclusion</p>                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Persons with limited mobility (e.g., handicapped, resident of remote areas, etc.) who will be placed at a clear disadvantage if registration requires personal appearance on the part of the registrant.</li> <li>• The presentation of identification documents as a prerequisite would also exclude those without official identification—a fairly common scenario in developing countries which usually have poor identification systems.</li> </ul> | <p>A segment of the population (i.e., those without valid IDs and/or access to registration portals). is expected to be disenfranchised by the SIM registration system.</p> <p>There remains no credible solution to the problem that a significant portion of the population do not have IDs or even civil registration papers needed for registration. According to the Philippine Statistics Authority, as of 2021, there were a total of 9.26 million Filipinos who still do not have birth certificates.</p>   |
| <p>The SIM Card Registration System will not be used for surveillance purposes.</p> | <p>Perhaps the most alarming risk of mandatory SIM card registration is its potential use for surveillance. This gives rise to significant risks for a wide spectrum of individuals, among whom are investigative journalists, whistle-blowers, witnesses, marginalized groups, as well as victims of discrimination and oppression, state-sponsored or otherwise.</p>   | <p>The possibility that the system will be utilized for surveillance purposes is high:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is not inconceivable that the SIM card registration system will be “weaponized” and used as a tool of “mass surveillance and authoritarianism” especially as the Philippine government is notorious for unlawful surveillance activities and data privacy violations. It has, for instance, experienced a number of high-profile surveillance controversies in the past, which remain unresolved to this day.</li> <li>• Also alarming is the fact that in expressing support for the measure, the Philippine National Police (PNP) has not guaranteed that the SIM registry will only be used to investigate cases of spam and text scams or other SIM card-aided crimes. Instead, they simply claim that it will be useful as a crime deterrent and when tracking criminals, in general.</li> </ul>                      |
| <p>The SIM Card Registration System will not be used for other purposes.</p>        |  | <p>Additional risks also arise from the possibility that the SIM Card registration system will be linked to other ID systems —like the Philippine Identification System (PhilSys), for instance—and then used by the government for other purposes not specified in the law.</p> <p>But this is not limited to the government. There is also the likelihood that telcos will utilize the new database under their stewardship for their own purposes. The first example was evident as early as the launch of the registration system where people complained of tick boxes put up by some telcos asking for their consent to the use of their personal data for marketing and profiling purposes, as well as the sharing of their personal data with third-parties. Telcos are clearly taking advantage of the government-mandated data collection, hoping to turn the new database at their disposal into a data resource for their own business interests.</p> |



## The Perils of PhilSys

In 2018, the government set up a national identification system through the Philippine Identification System Act (PhilSys). But several years since it was ratified, the law is yet to keep to its promise of efficiency, transparency, and inclusion.

After waiting for its long overdue issuance, some registered Filipinos received their PhilSys ID cards on paper in 2022, while many have yet to receive even a temporary ID. The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) justified this as a temporary, digital version of the actual ID because they are having difficulty processing the 72 million registered Filipinos—33 million short of its 105 million target registrants. On top of this, while most are anticipating to get a hold of their national IDs, some received two or more copies of theirs.

Instead of expediting the distribution of social services, the delayed and faulty rollout of the national IDs made government services all the more inaccessible. Aside from inconveniencing Filipinos, the PhilSys ID also puts citizens' information in peril. The law made clear that the system will not only store one's sensitive data, but will also record the registrant's activity when they use their ID. This arrangement, as Atty. Jamael Jacob, legal and policy adviser for FMA, said, "essentially makes [PhilSys] a comprehensive surveillance system." And as government databases are mostly susceptible to breaching and hacking, the PhilSys puts people's information at risk of misuse and abuse, such as identity theft.

The PhilSys also refuses to accommodate LGBTQ people who have dropped their legal names as they navigate through their newfound identities. Beside the blatant deadnaming of trans and queer people, this inflexibility denies LGBTQ people access to government services, and makes them vulnerable to harassment and threats.

## Underdelivering Digitization

In his first State of the Nation of Address, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. put emphasis on digitizing government resources and services to turn the government into a "an agile bureaucracy that is responsive to the needs of the public, provide good and solid data to ensure informed decision-making, as well as allow secure and seamless access to public services."

This move is laudable considering that the Philippines is lagging behind both internet connectivity and digitizing government services. But the country is yet to possess the needed infrastructure for this project. In 2022, the Department for Information and Communications Technology admitted that it will take a while before every Filipino gets internet access, citing that they are facing "financial and human resources limitations."

Lacking extensive and reliable internet connectivity, President Marcos Jr.'s push to digitalize the government could only lead to deeper digital divide among Filipinos. This gap does not only speak of the disparity between people who do and do not have internet access, but it also means that more Filipinos could be disenfranchised from accessing government services.

Another requisite for this project is creating impenetrable databases against cyberattacks. In 2022, various public and private agencies suffered from cases of data breach. According to the DICT, there were at least 3,000 'high level' cyberattacks in the Philippines from 2020 to 2022, almost half of which were targeted against the systems and networks of the government. The biggest one was the cyberattack on the Philippine Airline's information technology provider. The incident exposed the information of the company's exclusive members' "names, birth dates, nationality, gender, join date, tier level, and points balance." These cyberattacks mean business interruption and data loss, and point to the country's need for more cybersecurity professionals.

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a smartphone. The phone's screen is lit up, showing a blurred interface with some text and numbers. The background is out of focus, showing what appears to be a person's face and other people in a public setting. The overall tone is somewhat somber and focused on digital technology.

# Internet Freedom

## Freedom Under Threat

For the fourth year, the Philippine internet remained partly free, according to the annual report of [Freedom House](#). Ranking fifth among the Asia-Pacific countries, the report assessed how Filipino’s right to free expression was undermined by massive disinformation, lack of independent media, and weak judiciary.

Leading up to the highly polarized national elections, political parties found a new breeding ground for disinformation on Tiktok, Twitter, and Facebook. False information, smear campaigns, and fraudulent pages and accounts erupted across the internet, shrinking the remaining democratic spaces on the internet. Long before the elections, disinformation has thrown Twitter and Facebook into chaos, but Tiktok’s emergence as a short-form video hosting service expedited the creation and dissemination of distorted information.

On Tiktok, private individuals, celebrities, and influencers took on the job of journalists to deliver news. While citizen journalism offers a new perspective on news and information, it can also easily mix facts from fiction. Since Tiktok creators often use a conversational tone, their content can effortlessly mislead viewers from what is wrong and right. The existing design of Tiktok’s algorithm to create viral trends can also catapult anyone to stardom, lending micro-celebrities a semblance of credibility on the platform.

As more people are paying attention to social media personalities, traditional media is losing the public’s trust. Without the public’s support, the press’ struggle for independence turns difficult (see [Press Freedom Under Siege](#)). And without free press, the distortion of truth goes unchecked and cases of rights violations remain underreported.

Aside from lacking the necessary checks and balances, the people behind disinformation and harassment of journalists elude punishment due to the deteriorating judicial independence. Throughout his term, Duterte has been known to give powerful positions to his influential supporters who will work to protect his interest from detractors. This kind of judiciary enabled and tolerated a spate of human rights violations under Duterte.

Hell-bent on silencing critics, Filipinos are discouraged to engage in political discussions and join organizations in fear of retribution. Notwithstanding this pressure, youth and advocacy groups joined together to create the Philippine Electoral Agenda which outlined the following demands:

1. Institute comprehensive, age-appropriate, and culture-sensitive sexual and reproductive health education for all sexes and genders into the basic education curriculum
2. Provide access to decent jobs and livelihood opportunities for all, especially for women, teenage parents, persons with disabilities (PWDs), and recent graduates finding difficulty accessing employment due to the COVID-19 pandemic
3. Improve disaster response by establishing safe and livable evacuation spaces in communities, and providing evacuees’ basic needs such as clean water, food, and personal hygiene kits
4. Improve access to professional services, medicines, and facilities to cater to Filipinos’ physical, sexual, reproductive, mental, and emotional health needs – especially in rural areas
5. Enhance family planning and parenthood education in communities, and increase access to free contraceptives to address teenage pregnancy and rapid population growth
6. Update laws and strengthen programs for the prevention, detection, reporting, and responding to all forms of domestic abuse and violence
7. Protect public and digital spaces from all forms of sex and gender-based violence, harassment, and discrimination
8. Combat child labor and all forms of human exploitation
9. Improve access to quality education, especially in remote rural communities
10. Keep elections peaceful, and protect its legitimacy by preventing all forms of electoral fraud, including the exploitation of young people forced to pose as voters

In partnership with UP Internet, FMA also released a [Philippines Digital Rights Electoral Agenda](#). So far, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. was one of the few candidates who promised to digitize the country. He even professed he will make the internet cheaper in the country given the current high cost Filipinos pay for poor service. But all of his plans remain to be seen.

## What’s Next for 2023

Nearing the end of 2022, Artificial Intelligence (AI) began making waves in the global technology scene. It first prominently appeared in the form of deep-learning models that can generate images out of textual prompts. As it garnered interest, AI further developed into a generator of images that could pass as real. This alarmed citizens around the world as AI is poised to take disinformation to a higher level. Locally, the rise of AI is polarizing to many. On one hand, they can deceive, but on the other, AI can be maximized for research and education. As it further evolves, the benefits and risks of AI must be consistently weighed against its milieu.

Meanwhile, the Filipinos will be mandated to register their SIM cards by July 25, 2023. While its passing is now irrevocable, activists and advocacy groups are still working to hold back its implementation. They are firm in their assertion that the law could only do more harm than good, especially in light of recent data breaches. In 2023, advocates filed a petition before the Supreme Court to declare the SIM Card Registration Act as unconstitutional. They asserted that the law “[conditions the exercise of speech through the use of SIM cards to a mandatory disclosure of a specific combination of information that is supposed to tie every SIM card to a specific person.](#)” Filipinos are also expecting to finally receive their PhilSys cards in the coming year.