

SPOTLIGHT ON R2P



Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect and APPAP partner The Centre for Strategic and International Studies Indonesia (CSIS) Training Course on Hate Speech, Disinformation, and Incitement to Violence March 2023 Bandung, Indonesia

On the 2nd and 3rd of March 2023, the Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (APR2P Centre), together with APPAP partner The Centre for Strategic and International Studies Indonesia (CSIS), conducted a two-day intensive “Prevention of Hate Speech, Disinformation and Incitement to Violence” training in Bandung, Indonesia. Along with APR2P Centre and CSIS staff, the meeting was attended by the UN’s Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect, Mr George Okoth-Obo, who took the training as opportunity to speak on the relationship between R2P and hate speech and human right infringements.

Those participating in the training were Indonesian government officials from various ministries, alongside civil society actors, and representatives from Indonesian media. The training was conducted mostly in Bahasa Indonesia, with English language segments translated into Bahasa.

This was the 3rd iteration of the APR2P Centre’s “Prevention of Hate Speech,

Disinformation and Incitement to Violence” training, and this iteration was delivered by Dr Kirril Shields from the APR2P Centre, CSIS staff member Mr Alif Satria, Mr Septiaji Eko Nugroho from the Indonesian Anti-Hoax Society (MAFINDO), and former Indonesian Commissioner of Human Rights Mr Beka Ulung Hapsara.

Participants were awarded a Certificate of Completion, signed by Dr Kirril Shields and co-facilitator Dr Lina Alexandra from CSIS Indonesia, and the two-day training has been covered in the Indonesian press. Some of those who attended the training have since used the knowledge from the course to workshop suggested amendments to Indonesia’s Electronic Information and Transaction Law (Law No. 19 year 2016 on Electronic Information and Transaction).

Background

In recent years, hate speech and disinformation have escalated dramatically, due not only to social media’s presence, but because of movements

such as QAnon and intolerant religious organizations that employ hate speech and disinformation to promote their agenda. For many decades, however, hate speech and disinformation were influential in ostracising peoples and this has led, in some instances, to mass killing, such as Nazi propaganda against Europe’s Jews in the 1930s and 40s, and anti-Tutsi propaganda that was influential in the crimes committed in Rwanda in the 1990s.

Yet hate speech and disinformation are not easily halted, and as social media has grown in popularity, so too a rise in hate speech that may lead to violence, human rights violations, or even in the most serious cases, atrocity crimes. This course aimed to tackle hate speech and disinformation through education. As part of the curriculum, the course explains hate speech and disinformation, looks at the role of social media in exacerbating these issues, and introduces “best-practice” approaches to halting the crime. The course offers participants the opportunity to learn about hate speech and disinformation from

experts in the field of atrocity prevention and human rights advocacy from Indonesia and Australia, and it mixes seminars with participatory exercises to best illustrate some of the difficulties of hate speech and disinformation, and to find ways of addressing these problems, in line with international human rights standards.

Agenda

The APR2P / CSIS training course on “the Prevention of Hate Speech, Disinformation, and Incitement to Violence” introduced Indonesian government members, media, and NGO staff, to the composition of hate speech, and some of the complexities surrounding this phenomenon. Included were the typologies of hate speech, the role of traditional and social media in promoting hate speech, debates between freedom of speech and regulating hate speech, region-specific considerations, and discussions about the role of the UN in tackling hate speech.

In his opening address to course members, the Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect, Mr George Okoth-Obo, spoke on the importance of training government officials, stating that “Governments have a primary responsibility . . . from analysing and detecting hate speech risks, trends, or occurrences, isolating, preventing, and deterring them; and dealing with their effects. I thus hope that the officials taking part in the training will take maximum advantage of it.” The Special Adviser also drew particular attention to the composition of hate speech definitions, and the complex nature of this term: “it is important that the course will dedicate attention to illuminating what precisely falls or does not fall within the province of hate speech, a question that is typically approached from the legal perspective. At the same time, I hope that the fact of legal non-characterisation of a speech category or form as hateful would not be seen as thereby removing in absolute terms any concerns, particularly in those cases where a link to the risk or likelihood of atrocities would be present.”

Dr Kirril Shields then gave an introductory session on defining hate speech and disinformation, showing how legal definitions are used in various regions,

and how hate speech itself is difficult to define both legally and from a non-legal standing. In the second session, Mr Alif Satria spoke on the rise of hate speech in Indonesia, looking at case studies from the region, and stressed the point that politicisation is core exacerbator of hate speech in Indonesia. In the third session, Mr Septiaji Eko Nugroho from the Indonesian Anti-Hoax Society spoke on the risks of social media in an Indonesia context, and in a final session Mr Beka Ulung Hapsara spoke on the need for stronger legislation at national and international levels, and how Indonesia might address some of the problems associated with hate speech using Indonesian laws.

Participant organisations

The course was attended by representatives from several organisations: Indonesia’s House of Representatives; The Coordinating Ministry for Political, Legal and Security Affairs; The Ministry of Law and Human Rights; Jakarta Legal Aid Agency (LBH Jakarta); SETARA Institute; Interfaith Cooperation Network of Indonesia (JAKATARUB); The Jakarta Post; KOMPAS Indonesia; Indonesia Anti-Hoax Society (MAFINDO); and the Commissioner of the National Human Rights Commission (2017-2022).

Outcomes

The course has since been a cornerstone to discussions about amendments to national legislation, with Dr Lina Alexandra, one of the course facilitators, invited to speak at the Indonesian Government’s Focus Group Discussion that was organized by the Bureau of Expertise in the Secretariat-General of the Indonesian Parliament (Badan Keahlian Setjen DPR RI). This discussion was also attended by other course participants from the ministries. The “Prevention of Hate Speech, Disinformation and Incitement to Violence” training course was mentioned in the meeting’s Terms of Reference, distributed by the Indonesian Government. The course has also been reported in Indonesia’s KOMPAS newspaper in two articles from March and April 2023, both of which focus on the risks of hate speech within Indonesia, and a growing need to spread awareness of this human rights violation in the lead-up to federal elections in 2024.

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