

SAMSN Resolution: Call for an end to Internet Shutdowns

Journalists, leaders and representatives of journalist unions and media rights organizations under the umbrella of the South Asia Media Solidarity Network (SAMSN) and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), convened in Kathmandu from September 8 to 10, 2017 called upon all governments of South Asia to respect citizens' right to express opinions as well as the right to information on Internet-based platforms.

Expressing serious concern over the growing trend of arbitrary Internet shutdowns, the meeting called upon governments to refrain from shutdowns as they not only impact media and journalists but also cause massive economic losses, bringing about many adverse social impacts; access to vital information; and crisis communication with friends and family.

When the internet gets blocked or social media is shut down, many journalists lose a valuable research, verification and communication tool. This can delay reporting on critical issues like human rights abuses, disasters and riots. Internet shutdown is a form of censorship and prevents journalists from freely reporting, and citizens from sharing and accessing information. It means they do not have access to media sources and information. They face difficulties in producing and filing stories. Deliberate internet shutdowns pose a threat to human rights and block the public's right to know. They harm journalists, human rights defenders, businesses, emergency services and demonstrators.

The meeting also called upon journalists and unions to monitor and document internet shutdowns as an incident of press freedom violation, and to advocate against these shutdowns.