

MONITORING OF SOCIAL MEDIA PROVISIONS IN PEACE AGREEMENTS

Executive Summary

This summary provides an overview of key considerations and perspectives on how to implement and monitor social media provisions in peace agreements. The full brief is available [here](#).

Introduction

A critical and evolving aspect of contemporary conflict mediation is the impact of social media on conflict dynamics and mediation processes. Mediators are beginning to address this impact through standalone social media agreements, pre-process codes of conduct, or the inclusion of specific social media clauses in broader ceasefire or peace agreements. While traditional media clauses in peace agreements have been present for at least 30 years, social media provisions come with unique opportunities and challenges given their intersection with the public, propaganda, and (social media) platforms. This summarized brief equips mediators, negotiating parties, and implementation bodies with a framework for considering how social media provisions could be operationalized and monitored.

Setting up a social media monitoring or implementation support framework can be time and potentially resource-intensive from both a technical and financial standpoint. The full brief considers key questions to be answered (**why, what, how, and who**).

Who the brief is for:

- Mediators or mediation support teams in contexts where social media is an active conflict driver that may need to be discussed in a peace process.
- Peace agreement implementation mechanisms or monitoring bodies that are tasked with implementing communications or media-related provisions.
- Social media platform professionals that are considering the policy implications and partnership opportunities during moments of conflict and negotiated political settlements.

See the full brief for a compilation of recent social media provisions and agreements from contexts such as Ethiopia, Libya, Myanmar, Nigeria, South Sudan, Syria, and Thailand.

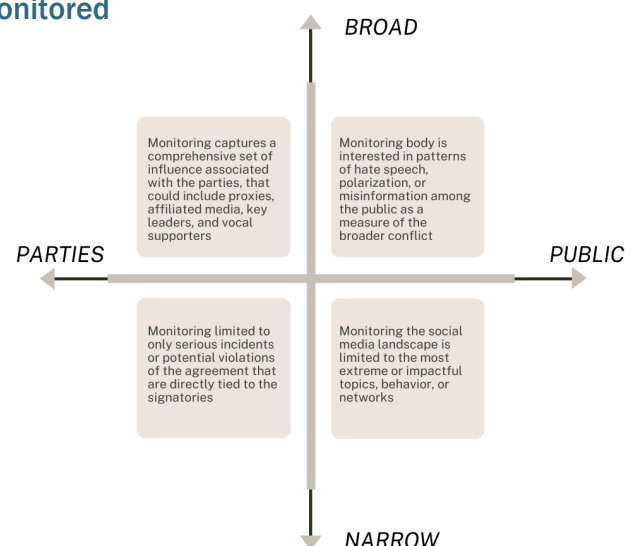
WHY: Defining the purpose of a social media monitoring body

A social media monitoring body can be created by the parties and operate for the purpose(s) of:

- Reducing and mitigating the risk of conflict escalation resulting from inflammatory social media content
- Enhancing confidence between the conflict parties by establishing or building upon existing norms about the online behavior of parties
- Protecting the peace process

Key questions: What is the purpose of a social media provision, and how does it contribute to the overall goal of the peace or political process? How will or should the monitoring of social media clauses contribute to achieving this objective?

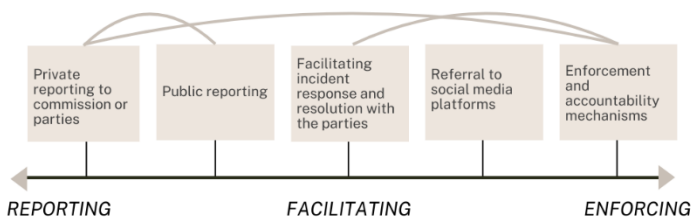
WHAT: Defining the scope of what should be monitored



Key questions: What will be monitored, what won't, and what menu of political and technical responses to incidents is feasible? In light of this, where is it most advantageous to spend limited time and resources?

HOW: Understanding the types of responses the monitoring body might use

In addition to deciding the scope of what accounts and behaviors could be monitored, there are also a spectrum of technical and political responses a monitoring body may have in their remit. Which of these response options are available to the monitoring body, *and in what combinations*, will also impact the type of monitoring that is conducted.



WHO: Who takes forward the objectives and strategies?

Who needs to be included in the monitoring body is based on a consideration of factors such as political representation of the signatory parties, facilitation skills, technical capacities needed and existence or not of other monitoring structures as a part of a wider agreement

Key questions: What financial resources and technical and political skills are needed to carry out the mission and scope of work of the monitoring body? What internal hiring, training, or external partnerships may be required in the set up or implementation phases?

How should the monitoring body relate to other relevant stakeholders, including academic and digital research centres, civil society and the public?

Essential skills, resources, and potential partnerships:

- **Skills:** Essential skills include technical expertise in social media analysis and data science, operational capabilities for deploying monitoring frameworks, political facilitation for stakeholder management, and security and legal knowledge for data protection.
- **Resources:** Key resources needed are monitoring software and tools, IT infrastructure, access to relevant social media data, and an operational budget for staffing, equipment, and software.
- **Partnerships:** Collaborations with technical service providers, social media platforms, and civil society organizations such as research centers, nonprofits, and advocacy groups should be considered.

Practical Steps and Takeaways

1. Define terms for monitoring (e.g. "hate speech", "disinformation", "incitement", "coordinated inauthentic behavior", "doxxing", etc).
2. Select relevant social media platforms
3. Understand what data is and isn't available
4. Decide what data is needed
5. Obtain the data
6. Evaluate the data and take action

When an incident occurs:

- How will the monitoring body determine whether it is a violation or not?
- What would a monitoring body do about the violation?
- Who would need to be involved?
- How will a monitoring body deal with spoilers who are not signatories?

Exploring Dilemmas and Divergent Views

While social media provisions offer new opportunities for peace processes, they also present complex dilemmas without clear solutions. The brief outlines some of the most pressing issues and their tradeoffs.

- *Should social media be mainstreamed throughout other clauses of a wider peace agreement or addressed in a more separate fashion through standalone agreements or protocols?*
- *Should a monitoring body function as a "watchdog" (focused on enforcement) or a "guide dog" (incident resolution and problem-solving)?"*
- *How to balance confidentiality with transparency in reporting?*
- *Should there be active collaboration with social media platforms for the monitoring process?*

This publication is an outcome of a joint tabletop exercise on the monitoring of social media provisions held by the Build Up, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, the UN DPPA Mediation Support Unit, hosted in January 2024.

Mediation teams that anticipate addressing social media dynamics in a peace process or agreement implementation could benefit from tailored versions of this tabletop exercise and are invited to contact the co-organizers for support in this respect.