



Faculty of Graduate Studies
General Sir John Kotelawala Defense University



**THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION ON
SOCIAL MEDIA IN SRI LANKA**

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Law

N.P. Inaya
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ABSTRACT

Freedom of expression on social media is a pivotal issue in contemporary discourse, reflecting broader societal values and legal frameworks. In Sri Lanka, the legal framework for social media is influenced by a combination of pre-existing laws and recent regulations aimed at addressing the challenges posed by digital platforms. The Sri Lankan government has implemented measures such as the Online Safety Act, which seeks to curb misinformation and hate speech, and has occasionally used existing laws like the Penal Code to prosecute social media content deemed harmful. These regulations, while intended to maintain public order, have raised concerns about the potential for censorship and the suppression of dissent, particularly in a politically sensitive context.

In comparison, India's legal framework is characterized by a more extensive set of regulations and a complex interplay between national security, public order, and individual rights. The Information Technology Act, 2000, along with its amendments and the more recent rules under the Digital Media Ethics Code, provides the Indian government with broad powers to regulate and moderate online content. Indian authorities frequently invoke these laws to address issues such as misinformation, hate speech, and national security threats, which often results in significant content removal and accounts being suspended.

Sri Lanka's regulatory efforts are more recent and evolving, while India's extensive legal arsenal represents a more established approach to digital content management. Thus, this research attempts to highlight how to address the challenge of designing legal framework in Sri Lanka that safeguard democratic values while addressing the complexities of digital communication focusing on the unique characteristics of the social, political context of Sri Lanka.