

INTERVIEW: GET TO KNOW THE OPEN-SOURCE TEAM

WHAT KIND OF INFORMATION DOES YOUR TEAM COLLECT AND ANALYSE, AND HOW DO YOU ENSURE IT IS VERIFIED AND RELIABLE?

The open-source team collects and analyses publicly available information relevant to criminal investigations, including social media, news reporting, civil society documentation and geospatial data. This analysis supports incident reconstruction, perpetrator identification, and background research about individuals, armed groups and related structures.

We verify information by comparing multiple independent sources, identifying where and when images or videos were taken, and assessing the origin and credibility of the material. We authenticate material by assessing whether content has been altered, manipulated or staged. We also preserve materials to forensic standards, including a secure chain of custody, to ensure that information can be used in criminal proceedings.

WHY IS OPEN-SOURCE ANALYSIS IMPORTANT FOR THE MECHANISM'S INVESTIGATIONS?

Our teams have no access to Myanmar and cannot conduct on-site investigations. At the same time, an unprecedented volume of potentially relevant material is generated and shared online and through other public means.

Open-source analysis enables our investigators to systematically identify, assess and contextualize this material, detect patterns across incidents and link digital evidence with witness testimony and other evidence. It is therefore a core investigative pillar, enabling us to advance investigations despite the absence of physical access to crime scenes.

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES THAT THE OPEN-SOURCE TEAM FACES?

Myanmar's digital information environment presents exceptional challenges for open-source analysis. Internet shutdowns, platform restrictions and limitations on the use of VPNs mean information about crimes in Myanmar often emerges slowly, incompletely or after significant delay. At the same time, the volume of online information continues to expand, requiring analysts to identify relevant material and deliver structured analysis without overwhelming investigative teams.

These challenges are compounded by misinformation, misattribution and emerging risks associated with advances in artificial intelligence, such as the creation of manipulated or fabricated images and videos and AI-generated digital personas.

While investigative demands continue to grow, our staffing and access to specialized analytical tools remain under pressure due to resource constraints, leading to delays and difficult prioritization decisions.

WHAT SKILLS OR QUALITIES MAKE A STRONG OPEN-SOURCE ANALYST, AND WHAT MAKES AN EFFECTIVE OPEN-SOURCE TEAM?

Strong open-source analysts combine analytical judgement, curiosity and persistence, and continuously adapt their skills as online platforms and technologies evolve.

An effective open-source team brings together a mix of complementary skills. Technical expertise, investigative experience, tactical and strategic analytical skills, and corporate and financial understanding all contribute to stronger analysis. Legal expertise also helps ensure that material can ultimately be used in criminal proceedings.

Language and regional expertise are also critical. Our team works closely with colleagues who have a deep knowledge of Myanmar and represent different regions and languages, strengthening accurate translation and contextual interpretation of open-source material.