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News Item

Maria Ressa Maps Disinformation in Documentary ‘A Thousand Cuts’ | Frontline

By Patrice Taddonio
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> In the months after Rodrigo Duterte was elected president of the Philippines in 2016, Maria Ressa’s staff at the independent news site Rappler investigated a slew of killings believed to be connected to Duterte’s brutal war on drug suspects and users. Ressa, a prominent journalist and Rappler’s CEO, also published a series of stories examining Facebook’s impact on democracy and the rapid-fire spread of online disinformation in support of Duterte, who has said journalists “are not exempted from assassination.”
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> Almost immediately, Ressa became a target of online disinformation and threats herself. At one point, she was receiving an average of 90 “hate messages” per hour, she says in the new FRONTLINE documentary A Thousand Cuts, directed by Ramona Diaz, which debuted at the 2020 Sundance Film Festival and has its U.S. broadcast premiere Friday, Jan. 8 (check local PBS listings). The film tells the story of the war on the press in the Philippines, the impact on democracy and how Ressa became a prime target.
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> As the documentary explores, the social media assault on Ressa only deepened the veteran journalist’s resolve to continue her team’s accountability reporting — and to identify and map the ways disinformation and hate spread across digital ecosystems.
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