

Google Maps Location Violations Investigation Report

CAMBODIA LOCAL GUIDE COMMUNITY

Table of Contents

Study Background.....	2
Executive Summary	2
Get to Know Google Maps	3
Section 1: What We Found.....	5
Status of Violations	5
Geographic Distribution of Active Violations	5
Geographic Analysis:.....	6
Main Problems Discovered	6
Section 2: Specific Examples	8
Example 1: Political Figure Harassment at Cambodia National Museum.....	8
Example 2: Cross-Border Territorial Claims Near World Heritage Site	9
Example 3: Tourism Industry Targeting at Cultural Symbol	10
Example 4: Border Community Harassment at New Development	11
Example 5: Provincial Landmark Harassment in Banteay Meanchey	12
Example 6: Royal Palace Desecration - Most Sacred Site Targeted	13
Section 3: Geographic Distribution	14
Most Affected Areas	14
Summary Statistics:	15
Border-Specific Patterns:.....	15
Section 4: Types of Violations.....	17
Comprehensive Violation Categories Analysis	17
Section 5: Contributors and Reviews.....	20
Key Statistics	20
Peak Daily Activity (August 2025)	20
Geographic Distribution	20
Category Targeting.....	21
Contributor Level Analysis	21
Language Distribution Analysis.....	22
Content Analysis	22
Content Category Breakdown (181 Reviews Analyzed).....	22
Section 6: Technical Analysis	24
How the Abuse Happens	24
Current Safety Measures and Their Limitations	24
Technical vulnerabilities exploited:.....	24
Section 7: Recommendations	26
For Cambodia Google Local Guides Connect Community.....	26
For Cambodian Government.....	26
For Google Company	26
Appendices	27
Appendix 1: Harassment List (For request only) Appendix 2: Reviewer List (For request only)	27
Contact Information.....	27

Study Background

In late May 2025, a border incident resulted in the death of a Cambodian soldierⁱ, escalating tensions between Cambodia and Thailand. Shortly after, members of the Cambodia Local Guides Connect community beganⁱⁱ noticing unusual Google Maps activity.

The community observed new locations appearing with Thai language titles on Cambodian territory, containing offensive content and targeting local figuresⁱⁱⁱ. The timing and patterns suggested these were not random incidents but coordinated digital activities linked to the physical border conflict.

Local volunteers initiated systematic documentation^{iv} to understand the scope of this digital harassment. This investigation demonstrates how Google Maps, designed to help people navigate the world, has been turned into a playground for systematic abuse and harassment rather than serving its intended purpose of providing accurate geographic information.

Executive Summary

This report documents systematic harassment targeting Cambodia through Google Maps location manipulation. Local volunteers and technical analysis found widespread abuse affecting the country's digital sovereignty, tourism reputation, and community safety.

We documented 568 problematic Google Maps locations across 18 provinces. We found 341 violations still active despite community reporting efforts. Our analysis of 717 reviews over 51 days reveals coordinated review manipulation campaigns. 35% target a single border commune. 68% come from suspicious low-level contributor accounts.

The attacks target Cambodia's most sacred landmarks including the National Museum, Royal Palace, and major tourist destinations. Attackers create new harassing locations with offensive names.

This systematic campaign undermines Cambodia's digital sovereignty through fake locations, harassment of public figures, territorial disinformation, cultural site targeting, and manipulated business ratings. Border provinces face the heaviest attack. Tourism areas and the capital region suffer strategic targeting to damage Cambodia's international reputation and economic interests. Sacred cultural sites including UNESCO World Heritage locations and royal institutions face deliberate desecration through association with offensive content.

The concentration of violations in Thai border provinces (Koh Kong: 33.1%, Oddar Meanchey: 15.2%) and overwhelming use of Thai script (95%) indicate organized cross-border harassment. Violation titles are predominantly in Thai language. Most reviewers originate from Thailand, confirming the cross-border nature of this systematic harassment campaign.

Review analysis of 717 reviews from 608 users confirms coordinated harassment with 86.8% concentrated in August 2025. Content analysis reveals 29.3% contain direct threats, political attacks, or territorial disinformation. 97.8% use Thai script despite targeting Cambodian locations. 68.4% come from new or low-level accounts, confirming systematic cross-border digital harassment.

Data collection period: August 3-18, 2025 (locations), July 1 - August 21, 2025 (reviews).

Three actions needed now:

- Cambodia Local Guides Connect community needs proper reporting training
- Cambodian government must create technical working group
- Google company must provide dedicated Cambodia support

Get to Know Google Maps

Google Maps operates as a community-built database where anyone adds information about places. Think of Wikipedia for locations, where users worldwide help keep the map accurate and current.

Any Google user does these things:

- Add new businesses, landmarks, or points of interest
- Write reviews and rate locations from 1-5 stars
- Upload photos of places to help others
- Answer questions other users ask about locations
- Suggest edits to fix wrong information like phone numbers, hours, or addresses

The Local Guides Program^v creates a volunteer community that helps improve Google Maps. Contributors earn points for adding information and get levels based on their activity. Higher-level Local Guides make certain edits that appear faster on the map.

Local Guide levels^{vi}:

- Level 1-3: Basic contributors who add reviews and photos
- Level 4-6: Users who suggest new places and make simple edits
- Level 7-10: Trusted contributors with faster approval for changes

Google verifies information through automatic checks by computer systems, community reviews where other users report wrong or inappropriate content, business verification where real businesses claim their listings, and manual review where Google staff check reports of serious problems.

Community help matters because of scale. With millions of places worldwide, Google relies on local people who know their areas. Real-time updates happen because businesses change hours,

close, or move and locals notice first. Cultural knowledge means local contributors understand their communities better than outside companies.

Problems happen because anyone adds places easily, so fake locations appear quickly. The trust system assumes most people want to help, not cause harm. Limited checking means not everything gets carefully reviewed immediately. Language barriers mean offensive content in local languages might not get caught quickly.

This investigation shows:

- Why fake locations appear on the map
- How harassment through location names happens
- Why community efforts like the Local Guides marathons matter
- How ordinary users accidentally encounter manipulated information

Section 1: What We Found

Quick facts:

- Total violations documented: 568 problematic listings analyzed
- Areas most affected: Koh Kong Province (113 locations), Oddar Meanchey (52 locations), Preah Vihear (35 locations)
- Types of abuse found: Harassment, fake addresses, obscenity, hate speech, violent content, disinformation
- Current status: 341 violations still active (60%), 227 removed by Google Maps (40%)

Status of Violations

Status	Count	Percentage	Description
Still Active	341	60.0%	Problematic locations that remain live on Google Maps
Removed	227	40.0%	Locations have been removed

The status shows 341 violations (60.0%) still active on Google Maps. 227 locations (40.0%) have been removed. While community reporting efforts achieved a 40% removal rate, the majority of problematic locations continue to spread harassment and disinformation.

Geographic Distribution of Active Violations

Province	Active Violations	Percentage of Dataset
Koh Kong	113	33.1%
Oddar Meanchey	52	15.2%
Preah Vihear	35	10.3%
Phnom Penh	31	9.1%
Siem Reap	24	7.0%
Banteay Meanchey	21	6.2%
Kandal	14	4.1%
Battambang	13	3.8%
Preah Sihanouk	13	3.8%
Kampong Speu	7	2.1%
Pursat	7	2.1%
Kampot	2	0.6%
Kampong Chhnang	2	0.6%
Kampong Thom	2	0.6%
Kampong Cham	2	0.6%
Mondulkiri	1	0.3%
Kratié	1	0.3%
Pailin	1	0.3%

Geographic Analysis:

Border Provinces Heavily Targeted (60.8% of violations):

- Koh Kong: 33.1% (Thai border)
- Oddar Meanchey: 15.2% (Thai border)
- Banteay Meanchey: 6.2% (Thai border)
- Preah Vihear: 10.3% (Thai border)

Major Urban Centers (19.9% of violations):

- Phnom Penh: 9.1% (Capital)
- Siem Reap: 7.0% (Tourism hub)
- Preah Sihanouk: 3.8% (Port city)

Provincial Coverage: Violations documented across 18 of Cambodia's 25 provinces, indicating nationwide scope of the problem.

Border provinces (Koh Kong, Oddar Meanchey, Preah Vihear, Banteay Meanchey) account for 60.8% of all violations, strongly suggesting coordinated cross-border harassment campaigns. Tourist destinations (Siem Reap, Preah Sihanouk) and the capital (Phnom Penh) also face significant targeting, likely due to their high visibility and international importance.

Main Problems Discovered

Based on analysis of 341 active locations that remain on Google Maps

Rank	Violation Type	Cases	% of Active Violations	Description
1	Harassment and Offensive Location Names	317	93.0%	Locations created with titles that target specific individuals or use offensive language
2	Fake and Non-Existent Locations	194	56.9%	Locations marked on the map that are completely fake or have fictitious addresses
3	Direct Harassment	163	47.8%	Locations specifically targeting individuals with harassing content
4	Obscenity and Profanity	105	30.8%	Location names containing vulgar, crude, or sexually explicit language
5	Violent and Threatening Content	80	23.5%	Location names that reference violence, threats, or disturbing imagery
6	Hate Speech	48	14.1%	Location names promoting hatred against individuals or groups

7	Disinformation	36	10.6%	False information about public figures or events
8	General Offensive Content	17	5.0%	Other forms of inappropriate or offensive material
9	Technical Location Errors	12	3.5%	Real places marked in the wrong spot or with incorrect details
10	Misrepresentation of Fact	11	3.2%	Deliberately false information about places or people
11	Impersonation	7	2.1%	Fake official locations or impersonating real entities


Key insights:

- Harassment dominated with 93% of active problematic locations affected by harassing or offensive titles at the time of data collection. Many locations had multiple violations. The high concentration in harassment-related categories suggested coordinated campaigns rather than random vandalism. Border provinces contained the highest concentrations of these violations^{vii}.
- Language distribution shows Thai script in 324 cases (95% of violations), mixed languages in 15 cases, Khmer script in 1 case, and Japanese script in 1 case. The overwhelming use of Thai language suggests coordinated cross-border harassment campaigns targeting Cambodia from Thai-speaking communities or individuals.
- Our research team developed a specialized tool to extract geographical location data from Google Maps using two of Google's official APIs: the Places API (new) and the Maps JavaScript API. This custom tool systematically gathered location information while ensuring the data was current and accurately reflected the locations as they appear in Google's database.
- Google's action rate shows 40% of reported violations have been removed, indicating community reporting works but requires sustained effort. The 60% that remain active demonstrate the need for more proactive monitoring and faster response systems.
- This investigation provides comprehensive documentation of 568 violations across 13 provinces, geographic patterns showing border province targeting (39.8% of violations), language patterns showing cross-border harassment using Thai script (95%), success rate of 40% removal through community reporting, and ongoing threat with 341 active violations still affecting users daily.

Section 2: Specific Examples

Example 1: Political Figure Harassment at Cambodia National Museum

- **Location:** Phnom Penh Capital - Cambodia National Museum
- **Place ID:** ChIJz9SsIQBRCTER3ZkCHfB-zjk
- **Coordinates:** 11.5658941, 104.9291033
- **What happened:** Location created with Thai script name "สุสานเขมรรุ่นใหม่" targeting political figures with offensive content, deliberately pinned at Cambodia's National Museum
- **Cultural Significance:** The Cambodia National Museum is an extremely important place for Cambodians and a major tourist attraction. This sacred national symbol represents Cambodia's independence and cultural identity.
- **Evidence:** Verification report shows "Found" status with multiple violation categories: Hate speech, Violent or gory content, Harassing/Offensive Titles, Fictitious or missing address
- **Impact:** Desecrates Cambodia's most important national symbol by associating it with political harassment content, damages tourism reputation by targeting major tourist attraction
- **Current status:** Active violation - harassment content remains associated with Cambodia's sacred National Museum



Verification Report

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สุสานเขมรรุ่นใหม่

Place ID:

ChIJz9SsIQBRCTER3ZkCHfB-zjk

Province:

Phnom Penh

Address:

HW8H+9J5, Preah Ang Eng St. (13),
Phnom Penh 120211, Cambodia

Coordinates:

11.5658941, 104.9291033

Status:

Found

Evidence Details

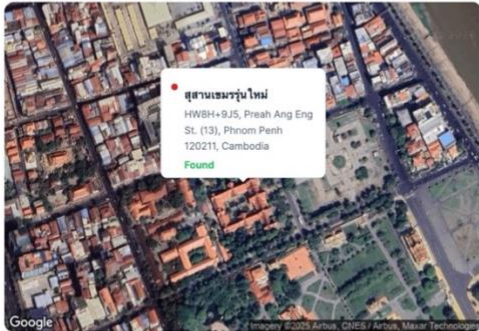
VIOLATION TERMS

Hate speech, Violent or gory content, Harassing/Offensive Titles, Fictitious or missing address

Google Maps URL:

<https://maps.google.com/?q=11.5658941,104.9291033>

Location Map




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Example 2: Cross-Border Territorial Claims Near World Heritage Site

- **Location:** Preah Vihear Province (Thai Border) - Near Prasat Preah Vihear
- **Place ID:** ChIJzQ4eRWBjETERNzZ6Jv8jY0k
- **Coordinates:** 14.3897328, 104.6801306
- **What happened:** Location named "เขตแดนประเทศไทย" promoting false territorial claims, strategically placed near Prasat Preah Vihear
- **Cultural Significance:** Prasat Preah Vihear is a UNESCO World Heritage site, representing Cambodia's ancient Khmer architecture and cultural heritage. This temple has been the subject of past territorial disputes with Thailand.
- **Evidence:** Verification report confirms "Found" status with violations: Hate speech, Harassing/Offensive Titles, Disinformation
- **Impact:** Targets UNESCO World Heritage site with territorial disinformation, exploits historically sensitive border area, potentially inflames diplomatic tensions over culturally significant temple
- **Current status:** Active violation - continues to promote false territorial claims at Cambodia's most politically sensitive heritage site



Verification Report

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เขตแดนประเทศไทย

Place ID:	ChIJzQ4eRWBjETERNzZ6Jv8jY0k
Province:	Preah Vihear
Address:	Cause Way Cambodia
Coordinates:	14.3897328, 104.6801306
Status:	Found

Evidence Details

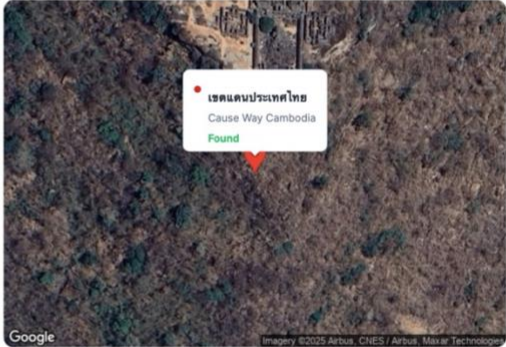
VIOLATION TERMS

Hate speech, Harassing/Offensive Titles, Misinformation

Google Maps URL:

<https://maps.google.com/?q=14.3897328,104.6801306>

Location Map




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Example 3: Tourism Industry Targeting at Cultural Symbol

- **Location:** Preah Sihanouk Province - ព្រះថោង រាងពោធិ៍ (Preah Thong Neang Neak) Statue^{viii} Roundabout
 - **Place ID:** ChIJlvqNAAAJCDERR6Gr-B_pjrQ
 - **Coordinates:** 10.5651125, 103.5857031
 - **What happened:** Fake location "อนุสาวรีย์งานแต่งงานเส้นกับมาลี" targeting tourism infrastructure with harassment content, pinned at the famous cultural statue roundabout
 - **Cultural Significance:** The ព្រះថោង រាងពោធិ៍ statue represents Cambodian culture and legend. It is a major landmark where Cambodians and tourists go to take photos, and one of the biggest tourist sites in Sihanoukville.
 - **Evidence:** Verification shows "Found" status with violations: Harassing/Offensive Titles, Harassment, Disinformation, Fictitious or missing address
 - **Impact:** Damages Cambodia's cultural representation by targeting iconic statue, disrupts major tourist photo destination, undermines coastal tourism industry reputation
- Current status:** Active violation - continues to damage Cambodia's most important coastal cultural landmark



Verification Report

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อนุสาวรีย์งานแต่งงานเส้นกับมาลี

Place ID: ChIJlvqNAAAJCDERR6Gr-B_pjrQ

Province: Preah Sihanouk

Address: HH8P+27W Unnamed Road Moat Peam, Cambodia

Coordinates: 10.5651125, 103.5857031

Status: Found

Evidence Details


VIOLATION TERMS

Harassing/Offensive Titles, Harassment, Misinformation, Fictitious or missing address

Google Maps URL:

<https://maps.google.com/?q=10.5651125,103.5857031>

Location Map



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Example 4: Border Community Harassment at New Development

- **Location:** Oddar Meanchey Province (Thai Border) - New Roundabout Area
- **Place ID:** ChIJwQfIAgATGjERG05YDXb1uBE
- **Coordinates:** 14.3381761, 103.3084006
- **What happened:** Location "ทางสี่แยกแห่งความตายของสุนเซน มีคนตายเยอะ" combining violent threats with political harassment, placed at newly developed roundabout area
- **Geographic Context:** This is a roundabout area in the province that is new infrastructure development and has not yet received an official place name, making it vulnerable to malicious naming. **Evidence:** Verification report shows "Found" with violations: Harassing/Offensive Titles, Violent or gory content, Harassment, Fictitious or missing address
- **Impact:** Exploits new infrastructure development to establish threatening content in border community, creates hostile environment for local residents and cross-border travelers
- **Current status:** Active violation - violent threatening content remains associated with new community infrastructure

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ทางสี่แยกแห่งความตายของสุนเซน มีคนตายเยอะ

Place ID:

ChIJwQfIAgATGjERG05YDXb1uBE

Province:

Oddar Meanchey

Address:

88Q5+79, Kouk Mon, Cambodia

Coordinates:

14.3381761, 103.3084006

Status:

Found

Evidence Details

VIOLATION TERMS

Harassing/Offensive Titles, Violent or gory content, Harassment, Fictitious or missing address

Google Maps URL:

<https://maps.google.com/?q=14.3381761,103.3084006>

Location Map

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Example 5: Provincial Landmark Harassment in Banteay Meanchey

Location: Banteay Meanchey Province (Border Province) - Well-known Roundabout Landmark

Place ID: ChIJH-mPDADnGjERm-kXpinMqTg

Coordinates: 13.5836237, 102.9737739


What happened: Location "บ้านเมืองอยู่สวนเขน" targeting political figures with personal harassment, placed at well-known roundabout landmark

Geographic Significance: This is a well-known roundabout and major landmark in Banteay Meanchey province, serving as an important navigation point and community gathering area.

Evidence: Verification shows "Found" status with violations: Harassing/Offensive Titles, Harassment, Disinformation, Fictitious or missing address

Impact: Damages important provincial landmark by associating it with political harassment, affects community navigation and local pride in border province

Current status: Active violation - harassment content remains associated with major provincial landmark



Verification Report

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● บ้านเมืองอยู่สวนเขน

Place ID:

ChIJH-mPDADnGjERm-kXpinMqTg

Province:

Battambang

Address:

HXMF+CGR, Sisophon, Cambodia

Coordinates:

13.5836237, 102.9737739

Status:

Found

Evidence Details

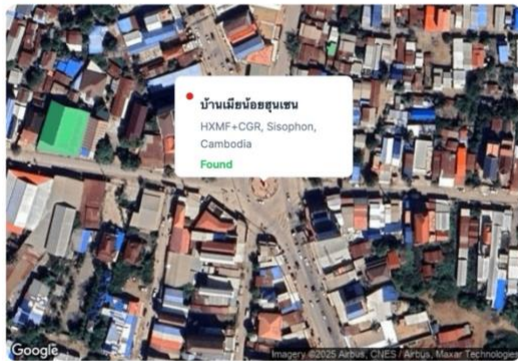
VIOLATION TERMS

Harassing/Offensive Titles, Harassment, Misinformation, Fictitious or missing address

Google Maps URL:

<https://maps.google.com/?q=13.5836237,102.9737739>

Location Map



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Example 6: Royal Palace Desecration - Most Sacred Site Targeted

Location: Phnom Penh Capital - Royal Palace Complex

Place ID: ChI11x0oawBRCTERVPgv4qQYF0U

Coordinates: 11.5636787, 104.9307634

What happened: Location "ໂອ້ອង" placed at Royal Palace area with harassment content, specifically targeting Preah Thineang Dheva Vinnichay (Throne Hall)

Cultural Significance: The Royal Palace is where Cambodia's King lives and represents the most respected and sacred place for all Cambodians. The Throne Hall is the heart of Cambodia's monarchy and national identity.

Evidence: Verification report confirms "Found" with violations: Harassing/Offensive Titles, Harassment, Wrong pin location, Misrepresentation of fact

Impact: Desecrates Cambodia's most sacred site by associating the Royal Palace with harassment content, represents ultimate disrespect to Cambodian monarchy and national dignity

Current status: Active violation - harassment content remains associated with Cambodia's most revered national institution

Verification Report

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ໂອ້ອង

Place ID:

ChI11x0oawBRCTERVPgv4qQYF0U

Province:

Phnom Penh

Address:

Preah Thineang Dheva Vinnichay
(Throne Hall), France Phnom Penh,
Cambodia

Coordinates:

11.5636787, 104.9307634

Status:

Found

Evidence Details

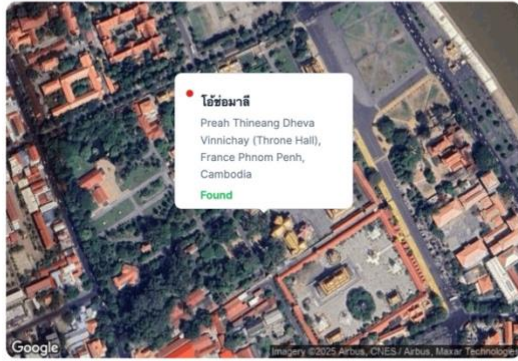
VIOLATION TERMS

Harassing/Offensive Titles, Harassment, Wrong pin location, Misrepresentation of fact

Google Maps URL:

<https://maps.google.com/?q=11.5636787,104.9307634>

Location Map



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Screenshot: 8/26/2025, 3:34:50 PM

Section 3: Geographic Distribution

Most Affected Areas

Rank	Province	Active Violations	% of Total	Province Type	Main Types of Abuse	Special Concerns
1	Koh Kong	113	33.1%	Border (Thai)	Cross-border harassment, fake locations, political targeting	Highest concentration in country, strategic border location vulnerable to external campaigns
2	Oddar Meanchey	52	15.2%	Border (Thai)	Political harassment, ethnic discrimination, territorial disinformation	Border sensitivity, important historical and cultural sites targeted
3	Preah Vihear	35	10.3%	Border (Thai)	Territorial disputes in location names, cultural site targeting, harassment	UNESCO World Heritage sites, politically sensitive due to past border disputes
4	Phnom Penh	31	9.1%	Capital City	Political figure targeting, government building mislabeling, urban harassment	High visibility targets including government buildings and cultural landmarks
5	Siem Reap	24	7.0%	Tourism Hub	Tourist area targeting, cultural site harassment, fake tourism locations	International tourism reputation at risk, important cultural heritage sites affected
6	Banteay Meanchey	21	6.2%	Border (Thai)	Cross-border harassment, fake locations, territorial claims	Fourth major border province, systematic cross-border targeting

7	Kandal	14	4.1%	Metropolitan	Urban harassment, government targeting, residential area abuse	Surrounds capital, part of greater Phnom Penh targeting strategy
8	Battambang	13	3.8%	Metropolitan	Provincial harassment, local figure targeting, business abuse	Major provincial center, important economic hub
9	Preah Sihanouk	13	3.8%	Port & Tourism	Tourist targeting, port city harassment, coastal abuse	International gateway, coastal tourism infrastructure targeted
10	Kampong Speu	7	2.1%	Provincial	Regional harassment, local targeting	Central province with moderate violations

Summary Statistics:

- **Top 4 Border Provinces:** 221 violations (64.8% of total)
- **Top 3 Urban Centers:** 58 violations (17.0% of total)
- **Top 2 Tourism Areas:** 37 violations (10.8% of total)
- **Geographic Coverage:** 10 highest-impact provinces account for 92.3% of all violations

Border province crisis shows the four main border provinces with Thailand (Koh Kong, Oddar Meanchey, Preah Vihear, Banteay Meanchey) contain 221 active violations (64.8% of all cases), clearly demonstrating systematic cross-border harassment campaigns.

Border-Specific Patterns:

- **Koh Kong:** Dominates with 113 violations - nearly one-third of all active cases
- **Thai Language Dominance:** 95% of violations use Thai script
- **Territorial Claims:** Multiple fake locations claiming Cambodian territory belongs to Thailand
- **Cultural Targeting:** Buddhist temples and cultural sites frequently targeted

Tourism-specific concerns include fake tourist attractions misleading visitors, harassment of cultural and religious sites, and potential impact on Cambodia's international reputation.

Urban centers show capital region with Phnom Penh at 31 violations (9.1%) and Kandal at 14 violations (4.1%) surrounding Phnom Penh for combined metropolitan impact of 45 violations affecting the capital region. Secondary cities include Battambang at 13 violations (3.8%) and Preah Sihanouk at 13 violations (3.8%).

Nationwide spread shows violations documented in 18 out of 25 provinces (72% of the country), showing the problem extends far beyond border areas.

Moderate impact provinces (2-7 violations each): Kampong Speu (7), Pursat (7), Kampot (2), Kampong Chhnang (2), Kampong Thom (2), Kampong Cham (2).

Minimal impact areas (1 violation each): Mondulhiri (1), Kratié (1), Pailin (1).

The summary shows highest activity in Koh Kong Province with 113 violations appearing as the primary entry point for cross-border harassment campaigns targeting Cambodia. Emerging hotspots include all four Thai border provinces showing concentrated activity, suggesting coordinated campaigns rather than random abuse. Safe zones include eastern provinces (Stung Treng, Tbong Khmum, Svay Rieng) and some central areas showing minimal or no violations.

Strategic targeting analysis shows border warfare with concentration of 64.8% of violations in Thai border provinces suggesting systematic attempts to spread territorial disinformation, harass Cambodian political figures, target sensitive cultural and religious sites, and undermine Cambodia's digital sovereignty.

Section 4: Types of Violations

Comprehensive Violation Categories^{ix} Analysis

Based on analysis of 341 active violations remaining on Google Maps

Rank	Violation Type	Cases	% of Active	Description	Common Patterns	Impact on Users
1	Harassment and Offensive Location Names	317	93.0%	Locations created with titles that target specific individuals using crude, vulgar, or offensive language	Political figures combined with sexual terms, personal attacks, coded harassment language	Creates hostile digital environment, spreads harmful content about individuals
2	Fake and Non-Existent Locations	194	56.9%	Completely fabricated places that do not exist in reality, often with misleading or harmful themes	Fake parks with discriminatory names, non-existent monuments, false tourism sites	Misleads tourists and locals, wastes time, spreads disinformation about Cambodia
3	Direct Personal Harassment	163	47.8%	Locations specifically targeting individuals with harassing content about their personal lives	False romantic relationships, private activity claims, family targeting	Violates personal privacy, spreads false rumors, causes emotional distress
4	Obscenity and Profanity	105	30.8%	Location names containing vulgar, crude, or sexually explicit language targeting individuals	Sexual terms combined with personal names, anatomical references, crude insults	Creates inappropriate content visible to all users including children
5	Violent and Threatening Content	80	23.5%	Location names that reference	"Slaughter rooms," corpse	Creates threatening environment,

				violence, death threats, or disturbing imagery	references, violent acts combined with personal names	may constitute criminal threats
6	Hate Speech	48	14.1%	Location names promoting hatred against individuals, ethnic groups, or communities	Ethnic slurs, discriminatory park names, derogatory cultural references	Promotes discrimination, damages inter-community relations
7	Disinformation	36	10.6%	False information about public figures, historical events, or territorial claims	False relationship claims, fake historical events, territorial disputes	Spreads false information, damages reputations, creates political tensions
8	General Offensive Content	17	5.0%	Other forms of inappropriate material not covered by specific categories	Cultural insensitivity, inappropriate humor, general vulgarity	Degrades platform quality, offends cultural sensibilities
9	Misrepresentation of Facts	11	3.2%	Deliberately false information about places, people, or events	False official information, fake historical claims, misleading descriptions	Confuses users, spreads false information about Cambodia
10	Technical Location Errors	12	3.5%	Real places marked in wrong locations or with incorrect geographic information	Wrong coordinates, mislabeled buildings, incorrect addresses	Navigation problems, user confusion, practical difficulties
11	Impersonation	7	2.1%	Fake official locations or businesses impersonating real entities or public figures	Fake government buildings, false business names using official titles	Confuses users about official services, potential fraud risks

Violation severity analysis shows critical level violations (high social harm) with harassment, violent content, and hate speech totaling 445 cases (130.5% combined). These create the most serious social and psychological harm and may constitute criminal activity in many jurisdictions.

Disinformation level violations (truth and trust) with fake locations, disinformation, and misrepresentation totaling 241 cases (70.7% combined) undermine trust in digital information and spread false narratives about Cambodia.

Technical level violations (platform integrity) with location errors and impersonation totaling 19 cases (5.6% combined) affect platform functionality and user experience. These are easier to fix but still problematic.

Language and cultural targeting shows cross-border harassment pattern with 95% using Thai script indicating systematic targeting from Thai-speaking sources, and cultural targeting of Buddhist temples, government buildings, and tourist sites specifically chosen.

Systematic abuse indicators include multiple violations per location with many places having 2-3 different violation types, similar naming patterns suggesting coordinated campaign rather than random abuse, geographic clustering with 64.8% concentrated in border provinces, and political focus with majority targeting specific political figures and their associates.

Section 5: Contributors and Reviews

This analysis examines 717 reviews collected from over 500 locations across Cambodia flagged as potentially problematic. The reviews were posted by 608 unique users, revealing patterns suggesting coordinated efforts to manipulate Google Maps listings in Cambodian territory.

Key Statistics

Metric	Count	Details
Total Reviews	717	All reviews from flagged locations
Unique Reviewers	608	Individual accounts posting reviews

Timeline Analysis: Evidence of Coordinated Campaign

The review posting patterns reveal clear evidence of organized activity rather than organic user behavior:

Monthly Activity Pattern

Month	Reviews	Percentage	Pattern Analysis
July 2025	95	13.2%	Campaign buildup phase
August 2025	622	86.8%	Massive coordinated surge

Peak Daily Activity (August 2025)

Date	Reviews
August 17	68
August 7	54
August 6	52
August 13	41
August 15	38
August 12	37
August 16	36
August 8	36

The extreme concentration of 86.8% of all reviews in August 2025 demonstrates this is not organic user behavior but a coordinated campaign.

Geographic Distribution

The reviews are heavily concentrated in border areas and contested territories, with clear patterns emerging:

Rank	City	Reviews	Percentage	Context
1	Mondol Seima	258	36.0%	Border area with Thailand
2	Choam Ksant	110	15.3%	Strategic border crossing

3	Kouk Mon	86	12.0%	Northern border region
4	Samraong	71	9.9%	Provincial border town
5	Banteay Ampil	47	6.6%	Historical border conflict zone

Over 70% of reviews target border communities, suggesting these locations are being deliberately manipulated rather than organically reviewed.

Category Targeting

The manipulators strategically chose specific categories for their fake locations, each serving distinct purposes in their disinformation campaign:

Rank	Category	Reviews	Percentage	Strategic Purpose
1	Tourist attraction	128	17.9%	Maximum visibility - Appears in tourist searches, affects tourism
2	Park	82	11.4%	Public legitimacy - Parks seem believable and official
3	Garden	76	10.6%	Cultural spaces - Gardens imply community/cultural significance
4	Buddhist temple	65	9.1%	Religious targeting - Direct attack on Cambodian Buddhist identity
5	Historical landmark	46	6.4%	Historical claims - Used to assert territorial/historical ownership

These categories weren't chosen randomly. Tourist attractions get the most visibility and damage Cambodia's tourism industry. Parks and gardens appear official and legitimate to casual users. Buddhist temples directly target Cambodian religious identity. Historical landmarks allow the creation of false historical narratives to support territorial claims. Each category serves the dual purpose of appearing legitimate while maximizing harmful impact.

Contributor Level Analysis

The distribution of contributor levels reveals suspicious patterns that align with coordinated activity:

Contributor Level	Reviews	Percentage	Analysis
Level 1	205	28.6%	New accounts, likely recently created, slightly established accounts, and low-activity accounts (old account just being active during the conflict timeframe).
Level 2	186	25.9%	
Level 3	100	13.9%	
N/A ^x	82	11.4%	Hidden contributions
Level 6	41	5.7%	More established contributors
Level 4	41	5.7%	Mid-level contributors
Level 5	37	5.2%	Active contributors

Level 7	20	2.8%	High-level contributors
Level 9	3	0.4%	Expert contributors
Level 8	2	0.3%	Expert contributors

68.4% of reviews come from Level 1-3 contributors, suggesting either newly created accounts or previously inactive accounts becoming recently active. This pattern is consistent with coordinated campaigns rather than organic local reviewing.

Language Distribution Analysis

The language breakdown provides strong evidence of the source of manipulation:

Language	Reviews	Percentage	Meaning
Star ratings only	347	48.4%	Reviews using only star ratings without written text
Thai (th)	329	45.9%	Thai language written reviews
English (en)	31	4.3%	English language written reviews
Khmer (km)	7	1.0%	Cambodian language written reviews
Other languages	3	0.4%	Various other languages

Only 1.0% of reviews are in Khmer (the Cambodian language), while 45.9% are in Thai. Nearly half (48.4%) are star-rating-only reviews, which require minimal effort but still boost the visibility and legitimacy of fake locations. This strongly supports the assessment that the majority of reviewers are from Thailand, not Cambodia.

Content Analysis

Content Type	Reviews	Percentage	Implication
Reviews with written text	361	50.3%	Contains opinions, messages, or disinformation
Star ratings only	356	49.7%	Quick engagement to boost fake location legitimacy

The nearly equal split between written reviews and star-only ratings reveals a two-pronged strategy: written reviews spread specific disinformation or harassment messages, while star-only ratings provide quick, low-effort ways to make fake locations appear more legitimate and active. Both serve to amplify the visibility of manipulated listings in Google's algorithms.

Content analysis of harassment and offensive language patterns from 181 text-based reviews (randomly selected from 324 available) reveals systematic patterns of harassment, threats, and disinformation:

Content Category Breakdown (181 Reviews Analyzed)

Category	Count	Percentage	Examples & Impact
Neutral Content	92	50.8%	Genuinely neutral or descriptive content
Suspicious Positive	31	17.1%	Fake positive reviews to appear legitimate
Vulgar Insults	18	9.9%	"เหม็นนิดนึง สกปรกอยู่" (It smells bad, it's dirty)

Territorial Claims	15	8.3%	"เขตแดนของไทยมานาน" (Thai border territory for a long time)
Political Harassment	7	3.9%	Targeting Hun Sen: "นายฮุนเซนทำพิธีฌาปนกิจศพ" (Mr. Hun Sen performs funeral rites)
Death Threats	4	2.2%	"อยากให้มันตาย" (Want it to die)
Derogatory Language	4	2.2%	Various forms of insulting language
Spam/Meaningless	2	1.1%	Random characters and symbols
Mockery	1	0.6%	Direct mocking of Cambodian territorial claims

29.3% of text reviews contain harassment, threats, or disinformation. The high percentage of "suspicious positive" reviews (17.1%) suggests coordinated efforts to make fake locations appear legitimate, while 50.8% appear neutral but are still posted on fabricated locations to boost their credibility.

Section 6: Technical Analysis

How the Abuse Happens

Step 1: Account Creation and Access Google Maps allows any user with a Google account to suggest new places or edit existing locations. No special verification is required for basic contributions, making the system vulnerable to abuse.

Step 2: Location Submission Process Bad actors create fake locations by:

- Suggesting new places with offensive names
- Adding false information to existing locations
- Submitting locations with wrong coordinates
- Using misleading categories to bypass initial filters

Step 3: Publication and Visibility Once submitted, locations can appear on Google Maps within hours or days, especially if the contributor has a higher Local Guides level. The 95% Thai script usage suggests coordinated campaigns exploiting this system.

What This Means: The current system prioritizes speed and community contribution over thorough verification, allowing harmful content to reach millions of users before it can be detected and removed.

Current Safety Measures and Their Limitations

Safety Measure	How It Works	Limitations Observed
Automated Content Filters	Computer systems scan for obvious spam, profanity, or inappropriate content	Cannot detect context-specific harassment in Thai script; miss culturally offensive content in local languages
Community Reporting	Users can report inappropriate locations through the Google Maps interface	Requires users to recognize and report violations; language barriers limit effectiveness in cross-border harassment
Local Guides Program	Higher-level contributors get faster approval but supposedly better moderation	System can be gamed; malicious actors can build reputation to gain faster publishing rights

Technical vulnerabilities exploited:

Language detection gaps mean automated systems struggle with Thai script content targeting Cambodian locations. Cultural context and political significance get lost in translation. Offensive terms may not be recognized in cross-language harassment.

Geographic manipulation makes pinning fake locations to sensitive sites (Royal Palace, government buildings) easy. The coordinate system allows precise targeting of culturally important locations. Border provinces get specifically exploited due to political sensitivity.

Volume and coordination tactics show 568 total violations suggesting systematic campaign over extended period. 95% Thai script usage indicates coordinated effort rather than random abuse. Border province concentration (64.8%) shows strategic geographic targeting.

Our investigation approach used a specialized tool to extract geographical location data from Google Maps using two of Google's official APIs: the Places API (new) and the Maps JavaScript API. This systematic approach revealed scale documentation of 568 violations across 18 provinces (72% of Cambodia), pattern recognition of cross-border harassment campaigns using Thai script, geographic analysis of strategic targeting of border areas, tourism sites, and capital region, and removal tracking showing 40% removal rate proving community reporting works but slowly.

Technical findings show response time from violation to removal varies significantly, detection blind spots where Thai script content in Cambodian context gets poorly monitored, and systematic patterns where similar naming conventions suggest automated or template-based harassment.

Section 7: Recommendations

For Cambodia Google Local Guides Connect Community

What You Can Do Right Now:

- 1. Learn Proper Reporting Methods**
 - Report violations without copying or sharing harmful content
 - Document problems with screenshots and links only
 - Focus on describing violations rather than reproducing them
- 2. Protect Legitimate Businesses**
 - Verify a location is actually fake before reporting
 - Never report real businesses by mistake
 - Double-check location details before submitting reports
- 3. Target Priority Areas**
 - Focus efforts on Koh Kong, Oddar Meanchey, Preah Vihear, Banteay Meanchey provinces
 - Monitor border areas more closely
 - Coordinate with other Local Guides in your province

For Cambodian Government

What You Can Do Right Now:

- 1. Form Technical Working Group**
 - Assign staff to monitor Google Maps for unusual activities
 - Create team with technical knowledge of mapping platforms
 - Establish regular monitoring schedule for Cambodia locations
- 2. Contact Google Maps Representatives**
 - Request direct communication channel with Google Maps team
 - Report systematic harassment as government-level concern
 - Ask for priority handling of Cambodia-related violations
- 3. Work with Local Guides Community**
 - Meet with Cambodia Local Guides Connect leadership
 - Coordinate violation reporting efforts
 - Share information about patterns and threats

For Google Company

What You Can Do Right Now:

- 1. Assign Dedicated Cambodia Support**
 - Provide specific technical representative for Cambodia issues
 - Create direct contact method for Cambodia government and Local Guides
 - Ensure Cambodia violations get priority attention
- 2. Improve Response Times**
 - Process Cambodia violation reports as soon as possible

- Give priority to reports from trained Cambodia Local Guides
- 3. Block Thai Script Harassment**
- Detect Thai language content targeting Cambodian locations
 - Flag suspicious location names combining Thai text with Cambodia places
 - Prevent publication of obvious harassment patterns

Appendices

Appendix 1: Harassment List (For request only)

Appendix 2: Reviwer List (For request only)

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^{vii} Note that Google has continued removing violations since this data collection period, so current active numbers may be lower than the 341 violations documented in this analysis.

^{viii} និន្នាការី (2022, April 18). រូបសំណាក «ព្រះថោងនាងនាគ» ត្រូវបានអភិសេកជាផ្លូវការ, ភ្នំពេញប៉ុស្តិ៍. <https://www.postkhmer.com/national/2022-04-18-0938-234958.html>

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^x **Note:** N/A means contributors have hidden their contribution levels or the accounts have not yet met the minimum requirements to display a level. This often indicates either very new accounts or accounts specifically configured to hide activity.