

October 26, 2018



Access Now

Amnesty International

Article 19

Center for Democracy and Technology

Committee to Protect Journalists

Electronic Frontier Foundation

Human Rights in China

Human Rights Watch

Independent Chinese PEN Centre

International Service for Human Rights

PEN International

Privacy International

Reporters Without Borders

WITNESS

Professor Ronald Deibert, Citizen Lab, University of Toronto

Rebecca MacKinnon, Ranking Digital Rights

Xiao Qiang, Research Scientist, Founder and Director of the Counter-Power Lab, School of Information, University of California at Berkeley

Professor Lokman Tsui, The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Google Inc.
1600 Amphitheatre Parkway
Mountain View CA 94043

650 253-0000 main
google.com

Dear Sirs and Madams,

I am writing in regards to your recent letter. We appreciate the opportunity to have met with many of you and your teams and welcome the opportunity to further engage on these important issues.

Since our founding, Google has been committed to making the world's information available to everyone. We believe that knowledge is empowering and that a society with more information is better off than one with less. Providing access to information to people around the world is central to our mission.

To further that mission, several years ago we launched our Next Billion Users initiative, dedicated to providing people in emerging markets with customized products and solutions so they can use the power of the internet, including through mobile devices, to better their lives. Many of these innovations have also helped users in economically developed markets, including across much of Europe and in the United States. We have likewise continued to look at ways to serve the 1.4 billion people — including 800 million internet users — who live in China.

From our own experience, we also recognize the significant challenges inherent in certain markets. While Google Search and other core services have been blocked in China since 2010, we have continued to reflect on ways to enable people in China to use our services. We continue to have hundreds of Google employees in Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenzhen, thousands of Chinese developers on Android, and hundreds of millions of Android users in China. We also maintain ads products and mobile apps, such as Google Translate, for Chinese users. However Search and other important services, such as Google Play and Google Cloud, remain generally unavailable.

Google has been open about our desire to increase our ability to serve users in China and other countries. We are considering a variety of options for how to offer services in China in a way that is consistent with our mission. In the course of that exploration, we built an internal product to understand better what Google search in China might look like. But at this stage we are still not close to launching such a product, and whether we would or could do so remains unclear. Accordingly, we are not yet in a position to answer detailed questions about our approach. We believe continuing to explore opportunities in markets across the world, including in countries like China, is consistent with Google's mission to organize the world's information and with our commitment to create opportunity for everyone.

As we explore these options, we value and take seriously our company's responsibility to respect human rights. In all our operations around the globe, we are committed to a process of responsible decision-making that respects the fundamental rights of our users and is consistent with our mission, our code of conduct, our Global Network Initiative obligations, our AI principles, and our privacy principles.

While recognizing our obligations under the law in each jurisdiction in which we operate, we also remain committed to promoting access to information as well as protecting the rights to freedom of expression and privacy for our users globally. Before we launch any search product in China, we intend to confer with GNI partners and other key stakeholders, and to carefully consider the feedback we receive.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kent Walker". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Kent Walker
Senior Vice President for Global Affairs
Google LLC