

The logo for ARTICLE 19, featuring the text "ARTICLE 19" in white, bold, sans-serif font, set against a red, stylized banner or ribbon shape that tapers at both ends.

ARTICLE 19

26th Session Human Rights Council
Item 3, General Debate

The Internet and Human Rights

16 June 2014

Joint Statement

Delivered by Andrew Smith, ARTICLE 19, on behalf of 39 NGOs*

Thank you Mr. President,

Two years ago this Council affirmed by consensus that “the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online, in particular freedom of expression”.

In 2014, at [Net-Mundial](#) in Brazil the Internet was recognised as vital to the full realisation of sustainable development goals. 31 UN Special Rapporteurs recently [affirmed that](#) guaranteeing the free flow of information online ensures transparency and participation in decision-making, enhancing accountability and the effectiveness of development outcomes.

Development and social inclusion relies on the Internet remaining a global resource, managed in the public interest as a democratic, free and pluralistic platform. States must promote and facilitate universal, equitable, affordable and high-quality Internet access on the basis of human rights, the rule of law, and net-neutrality, including during times of unrest.

The blocking of communications, including of social media in Egypt, Malaysia, Pakistan, Turkey, and Venezuela is a violation of freedom of expression, association and assembly and must be condemned. Dissent online must be protected. We deplore the detention of Sombat Boonngamanong in Thailand, who faces up to 14 years imprisonment for urging peaceful resistance to the recent military coup via social media in the form of a three-finger salute.

One year after the Snowden revelations, this Council must recognise that trust in the Internet is conditional on respect for the rights to freedom of expression and privacy, regardless of users’ nationality or location. Any mass (or dragnet) surveillance, which comprises collection, processing and interception of all forms of communication is inherently disproportionate and a violation of human rights.

ARTICLE 19

The targeted interception and collection of personal data must be conducted in accordance with international human rights law, as set out in the "[Necessary and Proportionate Principles](#)". Critical and intermediate infrastructure must not be tampered with, nor should any system, protocol or standard be weakened to facilitate interception or decryption of data.

We urge this Council to take action to comprehensively address these challenges.

Thank you.

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Africa Freedom of Information Centre
Albanian Media Institute
Arabic Network for Human Rights Information
Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
Bahrain Center for Human Rights
Big Brother Watch
Bytes For All
Cambodia Center for Human Rights
Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)
Center for Independent Journalism, Romania
Centre for Internet & Society
Centre for Media Freedom & Responsibility
Chaos Computer Club
CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation
Digital Rights Foundation, Pakistan
Electronic Frontier Foundation
Electronic Privacy Information Center
European Centre for Not-for-Profit Law (ECNL)
Human Rights Watch
Index on Censorship
International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL)
International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
International Press Institute (IPI)
Media Rights Agenda
Norwegian PEN
OpenMedia.org
Open Net Korea
Open Rights Group
Pakistan Press Foundation
PEN Canada
PEN International
Reporters Without Borders



ARTICLE 19

Samuelson-Glushko Canadian Internet Policy & Public Interest
Clinic (CIPPIC)

Simon Davies, publisher of "Privacy Surgeon"

South East Asian Press Alliance

The Association for Progressive Communications (APC)

World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters

Zimbabwe Human Rights Forum