



INTERNET FREEDOM

GOALS AND PRIORITIES

- Expand the group of likeminded states
- Increase the political cost for repression online
- Facilitate participation of civil society and private sector representatives in Internet-related policy making, both at national and international levels

"We believe people are entitled to the same rights of free expression online as they possess offline... We want that right for ourselves and we want that right for others even if we don't agree always with the views that others express... We do know... some governments will use any excuse... to silence their critics and that those governments have responded to the rise of the Internet by stepping up their own efforts to control what people read, see, write and say."

— Secretary Kerry, *An Open and Secure Internet: We Must Have Both*, Korea University, Seoul, Republic of Korea, May 18 2015.

CONTEXT

U.S. Internet freedom policy seeks to preserve and expand the Internet as an open, global space for freedom of expression, for organizing and interaction, and for commerce, across the whole range of human interests and endeavors. The State Department conceptualizes Internet freedom as including the exercise of internationally recognized human rights online, such as freedoms of peaceful assembly and of expression, including the freedom to seek or impart information and ideas of all kinds regardless of frontiers through any medium. By extension, it also includes the free flow of information that allows economies and societies to thrive.

The President's International Strategy for Cyberspace identifies the advancement of Internet freedom as one of the core principles of U.S. global cyber policy. Through sustained outreach to likeminded governments and to the private sector and civil society, we have built significant consensus around the importance of Internet freedom. The State Department works through a variety of bilateral and multilateral engagements to advance Internet freedom diplomatically, including through the Freedom Online Coalition. The State Department also regularly interacts with a wide variety of Internet companies and civil society organizations to promote Internet freedom. Additionally, since



2009, the U.S. government has invested over \$120 million in Internet freedom funding for civil society organizations to promote fundamental freedoms online globally. Civil society actors pursue this through protecting digital activists under threat worldwide, developing tools for activists to access a free, uncensored and secure internet, and by supporting research and advocacy for policies and laws that preserve an open Internet.

Not all governments value or respect Internet freedom. Some states view an open Internet as a threat to regime stability. While the United States is active on many fronts to advance Internet freedom, some countries are aggressively recruiting others to their vision of an Internet that would provide legal and/or political cover for their own varying degrees of censorship and repression.

CYBER DIPLOMACY

In July 2012, with strong support from the United States, the UN Human Rights Council adopted by consensus a landmark Resolution on Internet freedom, which affirms that “the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online.” A 2014 resolution reaffirmed this principle. Internet freedom has also been raised in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Group of 7 (G7), the Group of Twenty (G20), the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and other venues in recent years.

FREEDOM ONLINE COALITION

In 2011, we joined the launch of the Freedom Online Coalition, currently a group of 27 governments from five regions committed to coordinating diplomatic efforts to advance Internet freedom. The following are participating countries: Australia, Austria, Canada, Costa Rica, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Ireland, Japan, Kenya, Latvia, Lithuania, the Republic of Maldives, Mexico, Moldova, Mongolia, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Tunisia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The Coalition coordinates at multilateral fora; works with civil society, the private sector, and other stakeholders on specific Internet freedom issues via established working groups; and holds annual conferences hosted by member governments.



Office of the Coordinator For Cyber Issues (S/CCI)
United States Department of State

