

Internet Shutdowns and Content Blocking not the answer, says Internet Society

- *Joins the Keep It On Campaign aimed at stopping Internet shutdowns*
- *Launches paper on Internet Content Blocking*
- *Will host workshop on possible Internet Futures and their impact on Human Rights*

Geneva, Switzerland-- 29 March 2017 –The Internet Society today voiced its commitment to keeping the Internet on for everyone, in response to the increasing number of government orders to temporarily shut down or restrict access to Internet services. Speaking out at RightsCon 2017, the world’s leading conference on Internet and human rights taking place 29-31 March in Brussels, the organization underscored that any deliberate attempt to interrupt Internet communications or control the flow of information over the Internet puts society at risk.

Internet shutdowns, including those that impact social media sites or entire networks, occur when governments intentionally disrupt the Internet or mobile apps, often used in the context of elections, demonstrations or other tense social contexts. According to Access Now, [there were 56 Internet shutdowns recorded worldwide in 2016, an upward trend from previous years.](#)

A new paper launched today entitled [“Internet Society Perspectives on Internet Content Blocking”](#) explores the most common Internet restriction techniques and highlights the shortcomings and collateral damage from the use of such measures. “From censorship to SMEs going out of business, the human, economic and technical costs of Internet shutdowns are just too high,” explains Nicolas Seidler, Senior Policy advisor at the Internet Society.

The paper describes and evaluates the most common content blocking techniques used by governments to restrict access to information (or related services) that is either illegal in a particular jurisdiction, is considered a threat to public order, or is objectionable for a particular audience.

According to Freedom House’s Freedom on the Net report 2016, governments in 24 of the 65 countries assessed impeded access to social media and communication tools, up from 15 the previous year.

“Before they take action, we are calling policymakers to think twice: Internet shutdowns and content filtering are not the answer,” said Constance Bommelaer, Senior Director for Global Internet Policy at the Internet Society. “We are at a crossroads, and the actions we take today will determine whether the Internet will continue to be a driver of empowerment, or whether it will threaten personal freedoms and rights online,” added Bommelaer.

Because the future of the Internet depends on our ability to trust it, concerns around Internet access restrictions and fragmentation are front and center in the Internet Society’s [“Internet Futures” project](#). On March 29th, the Internet Society will host a workshop from

16:00-17:00 (Serenity conference room) that will engage the RightsCon audience in discussing how the Internet will evolve over the next 5-7 years, and how this evolution could impact Human Rights online. Issues to be covered will range from Artificial Intelligence and connected objects, to the role of government.

About the Internet Society

Founded by Internet pioneers, the Internet Society (ISOC) is a non-profit organization dedicated to ensuring the open development, evolution, and use of the Internet. Working through a global community of chapters and members, the Internet Society collaborates with a broad range of groups to promote the technologies that keep the Internet safe and secure, and advocate for policies that enable universal access. The Internet Society is also the organizational home of the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF).

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