Welcome to Introduction to Internet and Human Rights module.

In this module, we will learn about the Internet’s role in supporting Human Rights.
The Internet is a powerful enabler for the human rights and freedoms recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), such as:

- **Access to education** (Rights to education, art. 26 UDHR)
- **Expressing ideas** (Freedom of expression, art. 19 UDHR)
- **Connecting and associating with others** (Freedom of association and peaceful assembly, art. 20 UDHR)

These freedoms and rights are essential elements to develop our human potential for creativity and innovation, personal autonomy, dignity and basic human rights.
Government policy, corporate decisions, technical-development and user choices influence the extent to which the Internet supports or challenges fundamental human rights. Championing trust, open Internet principles, and dialog among stakeholders are critical to promoting the Internet’s role in supporting human rights.
Internet access is growing steadily across the world, entrenching the Internet in every aspect of our lives. For more than three billion people who have Internet access, the Internet directly impacts their ability to access news and information, political speech, religion and culture, markets and trade, and libraries of knowledge. It is important to sustain and grow Internet access and to do so in a way that supports human rights including through the respect of people’s privacy.
The Internet Society believes that trust and the respect of individual freedoms, whether offline or online, are essential to achieving human, economic, and social development for all people everywhere. Ultimately, it is up to all of us—governments, commercial and civil organizations, and citizens—to ensure that the Internet fulfils this vision.
Although the Internet's original architects did not intentionally conceive of the Internet as a tool to help advance human rights, the principles built into its technical design embody a vision of borderless, permission-less, and unconstrained end-to-end communication.
One could almost read Article 19 of the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights (the freedom to share, receive, and impart information and ideas across frontiers) as a definition of the Internet, even though it was written a quarter of a century before the invention of the first Internet protocol.

The key principles underpinning the Internet’s architecture must be preserved for the Internet to continue to support online freedoms. For example, the end-to-end, decentralized nature of the network empowers the edges. This means that end users—those at the edges of the network, spread across a global network of networks—can share information and ideas across frontiers without having to ask one central authority for permission.
While the key principles of a decentralized and permission-less Internet architecture have been beneficial to empower people, in practice some actors (e.g. governments and Internet intermediaries such as Internet service providers and social media platforms) can influence whether the Internet enables or restricts the flow of information. These parties can both facilitate and implement restrictions or content controls on certain cross-border data flows.
The unique characteristics of Internet technical development play a key role in facilitating the advancement of human rights. Building upon open Internet standards initiatives, individuals and organizations across the globe are empowered to continuously develop new technologies and applications that enable access to and sharing of information (for example, email, Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), instant chat, video, blogs), freedom of peaceful association (for example, social networks and forums), and access to knowledge and cultural content (for example, Wikipedia).
Every new communication technology requires that we rethink the delicate relationship between fundamental rights and the needs of states in pursuing some public policy objectives. The Internet's unique characteristics have extended the ability and means to speak, create, innovate and associate, resulting in new dynamics and sometimes also conflicts between freedom of expression and privacy and security. Reconciling these different elements, rather than treating them in logic of trade-offs, is a key challenge going forward.
While it is generally agreed that individual rights can, in appropriate circumstances, give way to matters of public interest (for example, law enforcement, public safety, security), other factors such as necessity, legitimacy, proportionality, and fairness of a situation must be considered before a lower level of protection is justified. The denial of users’ individual rights, including online, should not be justified by vague and unspecified claims of national security or by unsubstantiated claims for the need to use of police power for the purported safety of the people.
Weakening secure communications, such as encryption, could have negative effects on financial transactions, e-commerce, infrastructure security, and anonymous speech. Such outcome would harm the trust that Internet users put in the Internet, which would make end users less likely to rely on it and developers less likely to innovate in the Internet space. Potential chilling effects on the Internet must be considered when policy measures are proposed or implemented.
The Internet Society believes that security objectives should not be sought at the expense of individual rights. In a context of growing calls to overcome trade-off mindsets between security and online freedoms (in other words, that more of one means less of the other), we should consider ways in which security can be achieved without disproportional risks to online expression or privacy online.

Click the button below to learn more about Collaborative Security.

Collaborative Security

http://www.internetsociety.org/collaborativesecurity
Unfortunately, online freedoms are not guaranteed around the world. According to the 2015 Freedom on the Net report by Freedom House, “a growing number of countries are using online-monitoring technologies and censorship practices that are more aggressive and more sophisticated in their targeting of individual users.”

The Internet is a single, unified, global communications network that has the potential to create opportunity and progress for all.

And technically speaking, to deliver on this potential, the Internet must rely on architecture and operations that are globally connected, borderless, and permission-less.

However, the physical world is not borderless. It consists of many different nation states and communities of interest with competing objectives. This makes getting to consensus for collaborative action one of the major challenges of our time.
Some of the key challenges at the intersection of the Internet and human rights include:

- Content filtering and blocking
- Restricting or weakening of encryption technologies
- Liability imposed on Internet intermediaries

Let’s learn about each of these in detail.
Content filtering and blocking.
Both democratic and authoritarian countries have enacted laws empowering
government agencies to punish online dissent or to block access to online
content or services, often under the claim of national security or public order.

For example, policies and regulations that require interruption of the Domain
Name System (DNS) infrastructure, whether by filtering results or via domain name
seizure, have serious deficiencies. These techniques usually do not solve the
problem, they interfere with cross-border data flows and services, and they
undermine the Internet as a single, unified, global communications network.

DNS filtering and seizure can raise concerns for freedom of expression and access
to information, and often curtail international principles of rule of law and due
process. These negative impacts usually outweigh any short-term legal and
business benefits. This is why the Internet Society encourages technical and policy
collaboration to identify solutions based on international cooperation that do not
harm the overall stability and interoperability of the Internet and that respect all

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Key Challenges

- Content filtering and blocking

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- Interruption of the Domain Name System (DNS)
  - Interfere with cross-border data flows and services
  - Undermine the Internet as a single, unified, global communications network

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human rights.
Restricting or weakening of encryption technologies.

One of the key ways in which people can protect their data—whether in the cloud, on a hard drive, or in transit—is by using encryption technology. Encryption is the process of encoding messages so only those authorized to view it are able to do so.

Despite the enabling role of encryption to protect our privacy and expression, many governments, including strong supporters of an open Internet, have made public statements on the necessity to restrict the use of encryption so that those people undertaking illegal activities cannot hide from law enforcement.

Other proposals relate to granting governments special access to encrypted material in order to monitor whomever and whenever they choose in the context of security goals. While governments may have interests in crime prevention, such approaches would likely be ineffective. They would also likely decrease trust in the Internet.
The Internet Society is a firm advocate of anonymity and widely available end-to-end encryption. We believe individuals should have the ability to communicate confidentially and anonymously on the Internet. We realize that this aspiration comes with a set of difficult technical, economic, and policy questions, and that we need to work collaboratively and with urgency to find appropriate and ever-evolving solutions to these issues.
Liability imposed on Internet intermediaries.

Internet intermediaries—the services that facilitate online communication and enable online expression, such as search engines, social networks, and Internet service providers—are subject to an increasing number of governmental requests and injunctions to remove content from their platforms. Internet intermediaries often operate across a variety of jurisdictions and governments expect them to comply with national laws that, in turn, align in varying degrees with international human rights norms. In other words, Internet intermediaries are often faced with the choice between complying with national laws or human rights norms. There are many cases where speech can be considered acceptable under some national laws, yet forbidden under others. Dealing with these differences at the global level is no easy task and requires cooperation and dialogue.

The Internet Society believes that the principles of transparency, proportionality, due process, and accountability should underpin all policies related to content requests made by governments. Governments should also make sure that liability
regimes enable companies to respect their users’ rights.
Key Challenges

**Liability imposed on Internet intermediaries**

Internet intermediaries — often operates across a variety of jurisdictions, and governments expect them to comply with national laws that, in turn, align in varying degrees with international human rights norms.

- **Transparency**, as used in science, engineering, business, the humanities and in other social contexts, implies openness, communication, and accountability.
- **Transparency**, Proportionality, Due process, Accountability
Key Challenges

**Liability imposed on Internet intermediaries**

*Internet intermediaries* — often operates across a variety of jurisdictions, and governments expect them to comply with national laws that, in turn, align in varying degrees with international human rights norms.

The policies governing the intermediary’s responsibilities for the content of such communications often encroach upon the freedoms of expression, freedom of association, and privacy.

Proportionality means that a resource is divided among partners such that each partner receives a part worth for him at least of the whole.

Transparency. Proportionality. Due process. Accountability
Key Challenges

**Liability imposed on Internet intermediaries**

Internet intermediaries often operate across a variety of jurisdictions, and governments expect them to comply with national laws that, in turn, align in varying degrees with international human rights norms.

The policies governing the legal content of such communications have an impact on freedom of expression, freedom of association, and due process.

*Due process is the legal requirement that the state must respect all legal rights that are owed to a person.*

Transparency, proportionality, due process, accountability.

*Roll your mouse over each term to view.*
Key Challenges

Internet intermediaries — often operates across a variety of jurisdictions, and governments expect them to comply with national laws that, in turn, align in varying degrees with international human rights norms.

The policies governing the legal liability of intermediaries on the internet have a significant impact on users’ rights to free speech, expression, freedom of association, and the expectation of privacy.

Roll your mouse over each term to view the definition:

- Transparency
- Proportionality
- Due process
- Accountability

In ethics and governance, accountability is tied to answerability, blameworthiness, liability, and the expectation of account-giving.
The following are general guiding principles to consider across the wide range of existing and upcoming issues that can affect Human Rights online:

- Fundamental rights
- Open connectivity
- Trusted Internet
- Technical restrictions
- Open dialogue
Fundamental rights.
The Internet is about opportunity, creativity, empowerment, knowledge, and freedom. It has been built on these principles and its future success is dependent upon them. Basic and fundamental rights underpin these principles and the vision that the Internet is for everyone, everywhere. The human rights that people have offline should not stay offline. These rights are applicable online too.
Open connectivity. Being connected online does not guarantee that one will be able to innovate or to freely share information and ideas.

A supportive Internet environment, one that is based on openness and without excessive restrictions on online activities, is a prerequisite to online innovation and information sharing.
Trusted Internet. In today’s world, it is difficult to do basic things like shop, communicate, and run businesses without an open, available, and trusted Internet. This is destined to become even more important as the Internet becomes increasingly central to how we work, play, learn, manage our money, and healthcare.
Technical restrictions. The use of technical measures to limit Internet access undermines the users’ ability to exercise their fundamental rights and to leverage the Internet as a space that enables equal opportunities for all. We believe the Internet should be used to promote, and not threaten, human rights.
Open dialogue. We strongly encourage an open and inclusive dialogue on issues such as online privacy, including in the realm of national security, and the need for all stakeholders to abide by the norms and principles outlined in international agreements and fundamental rights, such as reflected in the International Bill of Human Rights.
Internet freedom issues are neither solely rights issues nor solely Internet issues; they need to be addressed by all stakeholders, including governments, the private sector, civil society, and engineers in the technical community. The Internet is a network of networks, and we all have a collective responsibility for its future.
How can YOU help shape the future course of the Internet?
- Recommend this slide show to people you know. The more we know, the less we will take the Internet for granted.
- Make time in your life to learn more through other slide shows and online learning courses
- Apply for Fellowship to IETF and Ambassadorship to IGF
- Read RFCs related to Internet architecture and privacy.
- Write to your government.
Congratulations! You have completed the Introduction to Internet and Human Rights module.