



1st February 2011

The Internet Rights and Principles Dynamic Coalition urges the Egyptian government to end the violation of the Egyptian people's rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly by lifting restrictions on access to the Internet and other Information and Communication Technologies.

Internet access has been shut down in Egypt. Mobile phone networks have also been severely disrupted. Restrictions have also been placed on Egyptian and international media, including the blocking of Al Jazeera's broadcast signal and seizure of its equipment.

These actions are direct and serious violations of the rights of the Egyptian people to freedom of expression and assembly. The right to freedom of expression is enshrined in international law in Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which Egypt has ratified. The right includes freedom to seek, receive and impart information through any media, regardless of frontiers. In modern society, the Internet is fundamental for the fulfilment of the right to freedom of expression. It is also an essential tool for peaceful assembly, whether online or offline, as protected by Article 21 of the ICCPR.

These restrictions on communications access are a disproportionate and unnecessary response to legitimate political protest. The UN Human Rights Council Resolution 12/16 states that it is never permissible for any government to restrict peaceful demonstrations and political activities, including those for democracy. It also states that placing restrictions on access to, or use of, information and communication technologies is never permissible. This includes access to radio, television and the Internet.

The explosion of information and communication technologies across the world has brought with it unprecedented opportunities for the fulfilment of human rights, social and economic development and democracy. These opportunities must not be lost through misguided efforts to control online communication.

The Dynamic Coalition calls on the Egyptian government to restore the right to freedom of expression and assembly in Egypt through removing all restrictions on communication. All professional and citizen journalists in Egypt must be free to report on unfolding events through any media platform, to national and international audiences. All people must have full access to the Internet, to mobile phones and SMS, and to national and international media.

About the Internet Rights and Principles Dynamic Coalition

The IRP DC is an international network of people who are working to uphold human rights on and through the Internet. The coalition is currently undertaking a major project to draft a Charter of Human Rights and Principles for the Internet. This applies international human rights standards to the Internet environment. It outlines what human rights people have when operating online, and what elements of Internet architecture need to be protected in order to realise human rights to the fullest extent possible. The Charter is currently released as a beta version, and we welcome comments and contributions.

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