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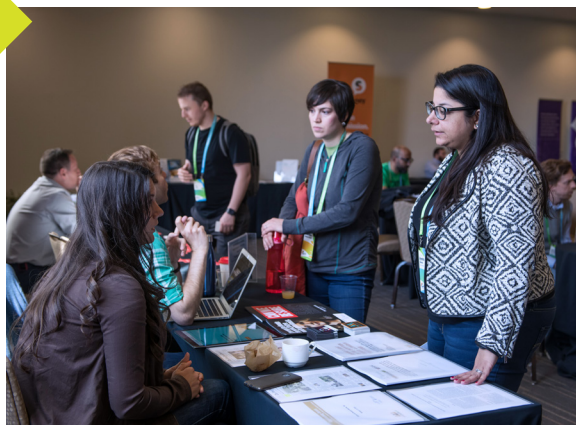
RightsCon

Toronto ▶ 2018

Outcomes Report

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- The opening ceremony
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- The Access Now Lounge and Digital Security Clinic
- The RightsCon Toronto community



Nick Dagostino and Nikki Gladstone kick off RightsCon Toronto with a group photo at the opening ceremonies

Introducing RightsCon Toronto

2,520
PARTICIPANTS

118
COUNTRIES

450
SESSIONS

700+
COMPANIES, GOVERNMENTS,
AND ORGANIZATIONS

Access Now is proud to present the outcomes report for the seventh event of our annual summit series, RightsCon Toronto (rightscon.org), which took place on May 16 to 18, 2018.

Since 2011, we have brought the digital rights community to many power centers around the world: San Francisco, Manila, Rio de Janeiro, and Brussels. Originally the Silicon Valley Human Rights Conference, RightsCon traditionally returns to its roots in San Francisco every second year. For 2018, we decided to move RightsCon to Toronto, one of the world’s most diverse cities and an emerging hub for technology and innovation.

As a country that strives for values of diversity and inclusion, Canada stands counter to recent global trends towards isolationism and exclusion. By moving RightsCon to Toronto, we committed to creating a platform where our community could address the most pressing challenges facing human rights in the digital age in a context of respect for diversity and inclusion.

RightsCon Toronto was a historic convening of our community, with more than 2,500 participants from 118 countries coming together to engage, workshop, and build a global agenda for the challenges and opportunities ahead. This was our most important summit yet and an inspiring testament to the increasing need for and relevance of our collective efforts across the globe.



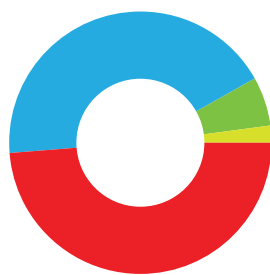
Participants by Region

- North America **57.1%**
- Europe **16.1%**
- South Asia, Eurasia **6.41%**
- Latin America **6.2%**
- Africa **5.3%**
- Asia-Pacific, Oceania **4.9%**
- Middle East and North Africa **4%**



Participants by Stakeholder

- Civil Society **50.8%**
- Private Sector **18%**
- Academic **13.5%**
- Government and Intergovernmental Organizations **6.7%**
- Press / Media **3.8%**
- Independent **3.7%**
- Philanthropic Foundation **3.4%**



Participants by Gender Group

- Identify as women **48.8%**
- Identify as men **43.2%**
- Did not disclose **6%**
- Trans* and Gender Non-Binary **2.1%**

Program Tracks and Sessions

RightsCon Toronto hosted our community’s largest program ever, organized around three full days of programming, with more than 450 unique sessions categorized into 18 thematic program tracks. Our tracks were curated based on submissions from the community, reflecting timely trends and emerging issues across the world. Sessions were proposed by the world’s leading experts and ranged from skill-sharing seminars and workshops to panels and fireside chats, all with an eye towards achieving tangible outcomes for human rights in the digital age. Check out highlights from each track below.



Global Affairs Canada strategizes on developing a Canadian position on artificial intelligence and human rights

Artificial Intelligence, Automation, Algorithmic Accountability

Some Like it Bot: Can AI strengthen global democracy?

National Democratic Institute

Bot-based smart automation and artificial intelligence is rapidly transforming the ways in which citizens go about their daily lives: from the way we learn languages, to obtaining medical advice, to having our own personal virtual assistants. But can bots also effectively help citizens engage with or hold accountable their governments and political institutions? This session explored different bot-based approaches that seek to reduce barriers between governments and citizens to strengthen communication, improve government transparency, and facilitate reporting on problems or abuses for increased accountability. Panelists gave a short overview of their specific projects, articulating both the successes and challenges of developing and deploying bot-based platforms with a diverse range of purposes.

Although bots used for civic engagement are becoming more prevalent, we are still in the early days of evaluating

impact and determining metrics to measure success. This session aimed to build a more robust community of practice around this field, offering concrete suggestions, recommendations, and resources that can be used by both those thinking about creating their own “bot for good” as well as experienced bot developers or implementers.

Accountability for AI: Remediating bias in machines

Microsoft

What does it mean to be transparent and accountable in the use of artificial intelligence? And how do we identify and address potential biases in the use of this technology? Through a multi-stakeholder discussion, this session achieved a better understanding of the human rights risks and opportunities in the use of artificial intelligence, in order to facilitate more informed dialogue, work towards effective remediation of the risks, and pursue opportunities to advance human rights.



Minister of Canadian Heritage, Mélanie Joly, talks with Mark Graham from the Internet Archive

Borders, Domains, and Complex Governance

The Global Digital Platform and the Nation State: Roles, responsibilities, and interactions to optimize human rights in the digital space

Stanford Center for Internet and Society and Stanford Global Digital Policy Incubator

Governments, academia, international organizations, and global platforms are going back to the drawing board, contemplating their capabilities and obligations regarding human rights in the digital space. Numerous challenges to freedom of expression in the digital information ecosystem have prompted this reflection, with all eyes on global platforms that operate across borders - arguably wielding the most power to shape human rights policy on the web.

The expansion of global platforms raises new questions about the responsibilities of public and private actors in protecting human rights. On one hand, platforms may be seen to act as de facto sovereigns, wielding greater economic power than many nations and imposing their own rules to govern user behavior and expression. On the other hand, platforms may serve as mechanisms to extend the power of national governments. Under domestic law, as currently understood in most countries, platforms may lawfully constrain individual users in ways that a state may not - for example, by prohibiting offensive-but-lawful speech or by silencing individual users without fair process. A state that coerces or persuades a private platform to suppress particular users or ideas can effectively extend its own power beyond the limits set in international human rights law.

This workshop provided an opportunity to conceptualize obligations of both states and global digital platforms in the current digital landscape. What are their roles and responsibilities in democracies and non-democracies alike? How should domestic law, international human rights law, and platform terms of service/community guidelines interact in order to protect human rights online? How do extra-legal

considerations such as user trust and economic competition shape the answers to these questions?

Is multistakeholder internet governance advancing, dying, or evolving?

UNESCO and the ICANN Noncommercial Users Constituency

Multistakeholder governance models are built around the idea of bringing diverse stakeholders together to collaborate on policy making solutions. These models have become particularly prevalent in internet governance, where representatives from the commercial, technical, academic, governmental, and civil society sectors all have a seat at the table and share a role in policy making. However, systems that are designed to be egalitarian can nonetheless manifest biases in practice. In the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers' (ICANN) case, although the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA) transition has already occurred, uncertainty persists over where governments' role in internet governance ends and ICANN's begins, allowing the former to wield a powerful stick over the process. Meanwhile, human rights advocates and those representing other non-commercial interests, who in theory engage on an equal footing with their counterparts from the business community, can be placed at a natural disadvantage by the fact that they generally have fewer resources to work with.

This session welcomed participants from ICANN and from the Brazilian government agency, the Comitê Gestor da Internet no Brasil, as well as multistakeholder internet governance participants from civil society, academia, and the private sector, to discuss the challenges and future of multistakeholder internet governance.

Campaigns and Advocacy

Massive audience engagement in human rights and humanitarian reporting

[Free Press Unlimited, Radio Dabanga](#)

To report on conflict, journalists need sources, verified information, and visuals in order to accurately communicate what is happening in conflict zones. In the case of Sudan, there is not much visual evidence available online and on social media, which is different than in Syria where hours of conflict are recorded and published. In Sudan, people share information, photos, and videos on more closed channels. The Sudanese Radio Dabanga, a project of Free Press Unlimited, is one of the first to tap into this. By communicating a WhatsApp number where information could be shared, the radio station received a daily flow of over a thousand messages. Without people reporting on the bombings in the Darfur Jebel Marra area or sending visuals of demonstrations turning violent, nobody would know these human rights abuses are happening.

Together with Humanity X, the innovation lab of Leiden University, Radio Dabanga is working to create an open source digital tech solution: a chatbot that filters incoming messages and talks to the audiences about what they report to Radio Dabanga. This chatbot will be used by Radio Dabanga’s journalists to parse and filter the most important information and visuals, as well as prompt the submitter with additional questions to better understand the situation being reported. They have developed a rule-based chat engine and adapters for various chat platforms, adhering to data responsibility. By prompting and securing digital documentation relating to the conflict in Sudan, Radio Dabanga can report important information more effectively.

This chatbot aims to be a widely used tool that uses audience engagement to demand accountability against perpetrators of the conflict. In this engaging fishbowl session, team members of the chatbot project showcased the chatbot resulting from the collaboration between Humanity X and Radio Dabanga. The talk dug deeper into the technical features of the chatbot prototype build by Humanity X, including the questions, message complexity, and analyzing texts.

Roleplay: Digital Participation Monopoly - An interactive game around the right to freedom of speech

[Deutsche Welle Akademie](#)

Digital participation is a precondition for freedom of speech in a digital age. However, negative interventions

against free digital communication are common: internet shutdowns, censorship, and digital attacks against journalists take place in many countries around the world.

Deutsche Welle Akademie invited participants to a fictional country where they would take on the role of a stakeholder within the digital ecosystem; for example, government representative, journalist, or citizen. By confronting them with disruptions such as internet shutdowns or the silencing of critical voices, participants grappled with the repercussions of these challenges. A full game set with a Monopoly-like play board, event cards, and avatar cards were provided to gamify the experience.

This session made the concept and relevance of digital participation more tangible by letting participants discuss within the realms of a simulation game. The discussions in this simulation game illustrated how multifaceted the field of digital participation is and how severe disruptions from the outside can be, but also what can be done to combat these challenges and broaden digital participation.





New to RightsCon Toronto, participants attend sessions at the Village Main Stage in the heart of the Community Village

Civic Tech, Citizenship, and Democracy

Innovation on the Front Lines: How grassroots activists are utilizing technology to enhance their work

The Fund for Global Human Rights

There has been a proliferation of technological tools for human rights defenders, offering new ways for activists to carry out their work and achieve their missions. However, uptake of these tools by local activists on the front lines of the human rights movement has been difficult. Much of the technology available — often developed by international organizations — is inaccessible to community-based organizations or groups working with marginalized or rural communities. Despite this, grassroots human rights defenders are beginning to experiment and develop their own innovative low-tech solutions to enhance their day-to-day work, experiments that are developed in context with local capacity, access, and challenges in mind. The problem, however, is that frontline groups often lack the technical expertise and resources to develop robust technological solutions, and are also often isolated from the conversations around technology and human rights happening at the international level, making it difficult for them to build upon, and improve, their low-tech work.

Innovation on the front lines featured a diverse group of grassroots human rights defenders, all of whom are utilizing different and unique context-specific, low-tech solutions to support their work. The panel provided frontline defenders a platform to interact directly with the international human rights and technology communities — to share their experiences about what technology is working for them, what is not, and why.

Observing tech in elections

KICTANet

What does technology-based electoral observation constitute? KICTANet deployed an observer mission whose sole task was to observe technology deployment in Kenya's recent election as well as the repeat presidential election.

Technology is dynamic and will continue to evolve with time. However, there are key lessons that need to be shared in order to influence efficient technological deployment in general elections. This is important for agencies conducting elections as well as organizations, in particular civil society, that wish to deploy their own observer missions. This session focused on gaps and lessons learned, in particular for countries that will be holding general elections, and/or using technology for these processes in the next two years.





Jim Halloran, Chief Digital Officer with GLAAD, delivers his lightning talk “Digital rights are LGBTQ rights: what to do when your content turns against you”

Demo Room

Harnessing data to visualize trends in global civil society

Freedom House

Over the past year, Freedom House worked with Datakind, a non-profit data scientist network, to organize and visualize around 100 governance, social, economic, and development indicators to illustrate historic relationships and trends between different datasets and indicators. Both organizations worked to create a collection of interactive web plots for visualizing the relationships between country-ranking datasets and other socio-economic indicators, including the Fragile States Index, UN Human Development Index, Freedom in the World, and World Bank open data.

The workshop was a demonstration of the newly created tool, specifically focusing on how to illustrate relationships and trends between data sources. The organizers provided specific examples of how Freedom House has been able to use the data for program strategy development, project design, and human rights advocacy. In addition to presenting the visualization tool, Freedom House made the tool and the complete dataset publicly available, in its raw format, on the Human Rights Support Mechanism (HRSM) Community of Practice webpage, which is through its USAID-funded human rights consortium. The tool is targeted for researchers, activists, program managers, and others involved in the human rights, democracy, governance, and international development fields to utilize.

Refugee.Info: Empowerment for refugees through connectivity and information

Mercy Corps

From its inception, Refugee.Info, a joint project by MercyCorps and IRC, focused on working with partners. In this session, MercyCorps demonstrated its unique approach for delivering sustainable, beneficiary-facing WiFi networks in various settlements, from remote refugee camps to urban settings.

By combining Refugee.Info WiFi networks and information dissemination platforms, it has successfully reached over 700,000 beneficiaries to date, delivering important information to people in need. Today, under the global umbrella SignPost, the project is still growing and has expanded to seven countries.

In this session, MercyCorps shared lessons learned, demonstrated why use of advanced networking technology is a must when delivering open WiFi networks to vulnerable populations, how to tune and tweak networks over the course of time, and last but not least, how its approach ignited a spark that led to Cisco and MercyCorps’ “Technology for Impact” five-year partnership agreement.



Cecilia Maundu, Digital Security Consultant, discusses the experience of trainers in the session Digital Security for Civil Societies in Africa

Digital Security in Practice

Help - we are under attack! A peek into the community of rapid responders

Digital Defenders Partnership

The session was hosted by representatives from the Digital Defenders Partnership, Front Line Defenders, Media Legal Defence Initiative, VirtualRoad.org, Access Now, and Greenhost. This interactive session was facilitated by a group of rapid responders that provide time-critical support to at-risk organizations and individuals. A fictitious case was presented in an interactive form to the audience, where the rapid responders showed how each one of them would contribute to supporting the organization at risk.

Speakers provided participants with a better understanding of the possible facets of emergency support and which actors are currently available to provide such support. They also provided a holistic view of the emergency response ecosystem (infrastructure, triage, psycho-social, legal, attribution etc.).

Whether participants work as activists, digital security trainers, company representatives, funders, government representatives, researchers, or non-profit employees, this session provided new resources for emergency response and the community's joint vision in this area.

Building cross-sectoral partnerships to improve LGBTQIA digital security

ARTICLE 19

Improving the security for LGBTQIA+ communities requires a diverse group of collaborators and trusted parties. Without trust, it is difficult to engage with marginalized communities without risking their tokenization or even their safety. Interactions with technology companies requires trust to ensure fruitful collaboration. These issues are made more complicated when working with queer dating apps and communities.

In 2016, ARTICLE 19 started a project to analyze the use of dating apps and implement recommendations that directly addressed the situation of the LGBTQIA+ communities involved. After more than a year and a half of work and coalition building, some of these recommendations are now being implemented.

Trust was critical throughout the process: from the research, to interacting and collaborating with dating app developers, local experts, and communities. This session brought together some of the different coalition members from the ARTICLE 19 project to discuss their role in the project and some of the successes and difficulties. The discussion focused on the need for trust in forming such collaborations and supporting the communities affected, and placed an emphasis on this issue of trust and how companies should and do engage with queer communities.



Panelists discuss diversity in tech in the session Women & Silicon Valley: How the age of #metoo can act as a tipping point

Diversity and Digital Inclusion

#feministinternet: Where is our movement now and where are we going?

Gender and Development Advocates (GANDA) Filipinas

Feminist movements around the world recognize the internet as an important site for the struggle for sexual and reproductive health rights, gender equality, empowerment, and liberation. This workshop revisited the Feminist Principles of the Internet (FPI) that are divided into five broad clusters: access, movement, economy, expression, and embodiment / agency. After three global convenings aimed at imagining and building a feminist internet, the workshop sought to answer the following questions: where are we and where are we going in terms of the FPI?

This workshop re-examined the FPI through the lens of feminist acts of resistance online and off before breaking into small groups and developing action plans to adopt and implement in participants' respective contexts.

From the Amazon to Saskatchewan: Tools of indigenous autonomy and solidarity

Digital Democracy

The focus of this session was on tool and capacity building with indigenous communities as mixed or non-indigenous tech teams and project collaborators. Panelist shared details on successful initiatives centering indigenous rights, described how digital inclusion is being imagined for indigenous led initiatives, and drew

connections between local and international projects. At the heart of the conversation was revealing better ways for non-indigenous organizations to engage with indigenous communities.

This session generated fresh perspectives and approaches to how technologists work with marginalized communities locally and globally.



Freedom of Expression and Censorship

Building Resilience: Creative responses to internet censorship and shutdowns

Meydan TV

Access to information is vulnerable to a host of factors, from state censorship to internet shutdowns, to poor infrastructure and natural disasters. This session brought together a range of groups working to protect access to information in politically hostile and / or low infrastructure contexts, with the goal of sharing and discussing solutions from several contexts and perspectives. Participants looked at technical solutions (mirror sites, distributing pre-filled hard drives, data casting using commercial TV satellites, and P2P content sharing behind firewalls) as well as advocacy strategies and operational models.



The session focused on what can be done - and how - by sharing tested, practical, creative responses that reflect both the risks and the opportunities on the ground. While there are no one-size-fits all solutions, there are relevant and transferrable experiences. This session also mapped needs and challenges and shared concrete strategies to reduce inefficiency of siloed problem-solving by bringing together a range of stakeholders in the hopes of making connections needed to enable continued conversations post-RightsCon.

Content Regulation in the Digital Age: Defining terms and examining content moderation at scale

Global Partners Digital

Over the last few years, technological developments and innovations have created new forms by which people can express themselves online. At the same time that various forms of online expression have diversified, a number of governments are actively considering introducing greater liability for online platforms that fail to remove illegal or harmful content.

As content removal companies, restrictive legislation, and opponents of controversial speech increasingly target hosts of user-generated content, keeping up with the incoming demand and associated legal obligations is a challenge for any publishing platform or social network.

In order to engage meaningfully on questions of liability and how to respond to the challenges of harmful content online, it's critical to be clear on exactly what it is we're talking about. Despite the frequent use of the terms "online content" and "content regulation," there is no universally accepted definition of "content." And even with this lack of clarity, many hosts feel compelled to remove content which attracts negative PR even when no existing laws or policies are being violated. These actions come at the cost of free speech and other online liberties.

This discussion focused on defining these critical terms and moderating content in this turbulent landscape.



Amie Stepanovich, U.S. Policy Manager at Access Now, moderates the session “Crypto wars revisited?”

Hacking and the Future of Encryption

The Rules of Cyberwarfare: Connecting a tradition of just war, attribution, and modern cyber offensives

[Red Queen Technologies](#)

We find ourselves navigating a middle way between bare-knuckled conflict and high-minded idealism in cybersecurity. With populism on the rise, and skilled cybersecurity operatives at a premium, what are the rules of warfare in cyberspace?

This panel discussion focused on the nature of the attribution problem in hacking back, related current to classic theories of military conflict, and discussed solutions to the patriotic hacker problem. It provided the ten most common tools used in cyberwarfare, and discussed their kinetic warfare equivalents, with a deep discussion of the ethics and responsibilities involved in deploying these weapons.

Crypto wars revisited?

[Canadian Internet Policy and Public Interest Clinic](#)
& [Citizen Lab](#)

This session explored the current encryption debate from a critical, multistakeholder perspective. The politics of encryption are highly contested, engaging

difficult legal questions and deeply held values. Encryption enables human rights and fundamental freedoms, fosters economic innovation, and is a critical guarantor of global security and public safety. The technology is essential to the work of human rights advocates, journalists, lawyers, and government officials themselves. At the same time, it remains a source of investigative friction, posing barriers to law enforcement and intelligence agencies in the course of their duties.

Historically, attempts to craft tailored and rights-respecting policy in response to those challenges have failed. Yet over the last year, there has been a renewed and concerted effort from high-level officials (particularly in “Five Eyes” countries) to secure new powers to limit public access to strong encryption. Against this backdrop, the panel debate established legal narratives, examined investigative challenges, and explored the human rights impacts (and practical consequences) of encryption policy. This session laid the groundwork for deeper conversations, more intensive workshops, and closed strategic meetings on the issue of encryption throughout RightsCon.

Health, Environment, Land, and Labor

Creating community capacity to respond to smart city initiatives to support data justice and human rights in a connected space

Open Data Institute, Toronto

As tech moves into public spaces, there is an accelerating urgency to prepare a community response. Given the wide gap in digital and civic literacy, tech companies are creating norms in a legal and policy vacuum. Residents are vulnerable to their data and interests being used and sold, sometimes back to the state through data products and services. Innovation and the allure of job creation make governments willing partners in programs that ultimately cede control and power to vendors. In this context, it is vital to come together with an advocacy aim of defining the laws, policies, and conversations that need to happen now to ensure civic responsibilities are protected by the government and by residents.

In Toronto, Sidewalk Labs, sister company to Google, is working on an innovation and development plan for Quayside, a piece of land on Toronto's waterfront. This workshop focused on building capacity within communities and cities to organize cross-sectorally in response to smart city initiatives, highlighting the key governance issues that need to be raised and working on policy approaches to manage them. The techniques discussed applied to general smart city development, not the one-off project informing them.

This workshop brought together organizers from Toronto working to expand engagement on the Sidewalk Toronto project to date. This group has begun work on a call-to-

action for government to create and define a national data infrastructure strategy and provided an update on status and next steps, as well as sharing insights and lessons learned.

Opportunities and challenges of Blockchain technologies for Sustainable Development Goals

Centre for International Governance Innovation

Sustainable Development Goal 17 recognizes the importance of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) in developing global partnerships for sustainable development. However, ICTs are also a tool whose use cuts across all of the Sustainable Development Goals as an important part of implementation.

In this panel, experts discussed the disruptive potential and challenges of Blockchain as a Distributed Ledger Technology (DLT) in support of the Sustainable Development Goals. While the technology is still in a nascent phase and many issues will be addressed as the technical capability develops, some of the key constraints to addressing these challenges fall outside the scope of technology. These include governance challenges, capacity issues, ethical struggles, and the effect of misinformation and hype.

In this session, panelists introduced the DLT solutions that they are proposing or following, exchanged ideas, shared lessons learned, and examined opportunities and challenges at policy, organizational, and individual levels.

International Trade and the Commons

Is illicit sharing the imperative future for educational access?

Creative Commons

Copyright protections continue to be ratcheted up around the world, in service of powerful incumbent rights holders, and to the detriment of users, educators, students, researchers, and the public. With ever-higher costs to education, especially regarding the pricing of crucial learning materials like textbooks and research articles, how can students get access to the learning materials they need? There has been some important advances in practice and policy around supporting open educational resources, but, at least for the time being, their adoption is limited, due to the pressure from commercial market players, and the slowness of state-level policy changes.

Because of these conditions, students, teachers, and researchers are taking matters into their own hands to get access (and to share) educational materials that were always meant to be distributed widely—were it not for the artificial restrictions placed on them by copyright law. But these communities are putting themselves in the crosshairs of the law when they do so. We see students like Diego Gómez, a scientist from Colombia who for the last three years has been criminally prosecuted for sharing an academic paper online. We get situations where copy shops in India and Uruguay have been threatened to be shut down because their owners were making unsanctioned reproductions of educational materials. And we get the story of Sci-Hub, the rogue repository that offers free access to the majority of scientific research articles around the world—and has had several stinging judgments levied against it.

This session examined these and other cases, and discussed ideas around improving access to educational materials for the benefit of teaching and learning, and the public interest. It did so by exploring various opportunities for policy work and advocacy, including law reform (such as educational exceptions to copyright), popular campaigning in defense of students and access to information, and techniques being used to share educational materials openly on the web.

Can trade agreements such as CPTPP, NAFTA, and RCEP be used as a tool for advancing digital rights?

Electronic Frontier Foundation

While the worst of the intellectual property chapter may be suspended in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), ongoing negotiations in trade agreements continue to put our digital rights at stake: the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), and what remains of the TPP itself, now known as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). Across the board, digital rights advocates are concerned about the serious procedural shortcomings in trade agreements, such as lack of transparency and meaningful consultation with civil society. Additionally, such agreements impact internet policy in substantive ways, but do not accord with the established multistakeholder nature of internet governance.

Media, (Dis)information, and Fake News

Bot Battles: Disinformation, computational propaganda, and speech regulation

Digital Rights and Press Freedom

This session brought together academics, program implementers, lawyers, technologists, and journalists who work on various aspects of responses aimed at countering threats posed by propaganda, especially computational propaganda, disinformation, hate speech, trolling, and other negative forms of content spread in social and traditional media. Current challenges posed by information warfare have forced promoters of democratic values to re-think long held international norms and best practices that support freedom of speech, press, and expression, and access to information, while at the same time responding to the very real and threatening challenges posed by disinformation and propaganda, often driven by automated, online systems.

The uncertainty about how to best respond to threats posed by disinformation and propaganda is acutely felt by media development organizations (donors,

However, differences of opinion have emerged as well. Some digital rights advocates see opportunity as well as threat, believing that trade agreements can be effective tools for advancing digital rights. For example, agreements might be used to persuade member countries to improve privacy protections and expand free expression rights or reduce online censorship. On the other hand, other experts among civil society have cautioned against this, noting that the particular model of trade agreements observed to date has increased inequality and given greater rights to big corporations at the expense of workers, consumers, and the environment. Thus, these agreements may be more susceptible to giving greater rights to monopolistic internet giants at the expense of users in the digital context, such as our privacy and personal data rights, fair use rights, and the ability to innovate without permission.

This roundtable session conducted a debate among experts and advocates in digital rights and trade, representing different points of view concerning the general issue outlined above. Panelists and participants explored this central question: can regional and international trade agreements be used to advance digital rights, and if so, how?



implementers, media outlets) in countries like Ukraine and Georgia as well as throughout Eastern and Southeastern Europe, where for years media assistance support has been directed at supporting “the legal enabling environment for free and independent media” — a term that broadly encompasses efforts to support rule of law designed to promote freedom of the press, access to information, and a democratic media environment. These efforts, however, are under threat not only from information warfare tactics including disinformation and computational propaganda campaigns; they are also tied to and part of the spread of illiberal democracy.

As such, this session invited presenters to comment on how to define propaganda, misinformation, and disinformation; whether to even attempt to regulate it; and how and why our current “international standards and best practices” that support freedom of expression are so challenged, and perhaps in need of some critical re-thinking in light of new communications technologies and the weaponization of information.

Following the framing of the problems and challenges for free speech and digital rights in an age of computational propaganda and deliberate acts to misinform and spread fake news, the session engaged

in a debate and encouraged audience participation and feedback on the issues at hand.

Leveraging technology to address misinformation
Global Affairs Canada

Global Affairs Canada hosted a discussion focused on leveraging digital innovation to combat disinformation, including computational propaganda. The use of disinformation by malicious actors to interfere in democratic processes has become a center-stage issue for policy makers and other stakeholders around the world. Serious reflection about effectively addressing and countering this complex problem is underway and requires input from the full spectrum of stakeholders.

A key question on everyone’s mind is how can we prevent and counter such nefarious activities, while at the same time protecting and promoting human rights, with freedom of expression and other civil and political rights at the forefront? And while regulation and sanctions loom large, RightsCon provided an opportune moment to examine how innovation, including digital tools, apps, AI, and blockchain can be leveraged to protect civil society and democracy.

Network Disruptions and Discrimination

Digital human rights in the Middle East
The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP)

Authoritarianism is increasingly influencing the digital space and the way in which the state and actors within countries are able to operate and utilize it. Russia, China, and Iran are building their own internets, with language and ideas that are regulated to fit the narrative. In North America, the rise of populism, and the utilization of digital space to disseminate those ideas, have shaped the recent election in the U.S. And in the Middle East, Arab states which iconically utilized digital spaces in 2010 to demand change, are today becoming failed states.

This panel brought together experts on digital security, human rights, internet governance, and foreign policy that seek to preserve human rights at the intersection of digital and public spaces. The session unpacked the following question: What is the role of digital human rights in a context of broken rule of law and no political representation? Throughout the session, speakers highlighted the level of targeted harassment and state-sponsored crackdown on free speech via online media, discussed the role which organizations and policy makers can play in securing human rights online, and brainstormed recommendations in which rights can still be upheld in this new digital age.



Participants listen to presentations ahead of brainstorming during a roundtable workshop session

When Repressive Authorities #KeptOn
 Strathmore University

Field research in Africa and other regions reveal that authority-led information manipulation is assuming different patterns, reflecting a range of motivations, and can include efforts undertaken to open up access to information or secure privacy as much as efforts undertaken to do the opposite.

While the current focus on internet shutdowns remains of utmost importance, less discussed are instances when authorities keep the internet on for their benefit, including to seek control of the public discourse to achieve political goals. This trend of control is increasingly seen during key political events such as elections and coups. Such controls, which are often applied in highly dynamic ways, frequently respond to events on the ground. During public uprisings, authorities appear to view the internet as a double-

edged sword, and therefore deciding to shut it down or to keep it open is the authoritarian’s biggest dilemma.

The session developed a stronger analytical and conceptual understanding of the strategies being pursued by the set of leading authoritarian powers in Africa and globally to control the flow of information online; assessed the nature of the challenge this presents to the Internet Freedom community; and determined what opportunities may be available to digital rights activists within these countries—and to those outside seeking to support them—that have not been adequately explored or exploited. It also equipped advocacy strategists with solid facts to lead the global fight against censorship and disruption of networks, information, and communication by presenting an opportunity to discuss other emerging trends in surveillance and censorship, such as new forms of surveillance by police officers and intelligence services such as social media intelligence (SOCMINT), and to offer recommendations.



RightsCon participants exchange ideas in a standing room-only session

Philanthropy, Operations, and Shrinking Civic Space

Proceeding with Caution: Doing good work in difficult places

Internews

High-impact work in advancing human rights involves taking risks. How do we as a broad community identify, assess, and respond to those risks? How can we do this more effectively with shared approaches and resources? Panelists included funders, large international NGOs, risk assessment experts, and practitioners.

Moving From Funding-Centric to Cause-Centric

Civil Rights Defenders

Today, many NGOs are incentivized to hold their ideas and data close, as it allows for unique proposals and better chances to receive funding. The donor model often

promotes competition over cooperation. At the same time, all actors involved in human rights know that funding is scarce, and that there are more needs than resources. If solving problems and improving development is our joint key focus, we need to start cooperating.

Duplication of efforts is both costly and inefficient, and does not help our beneficiaries. We need to transition from a funding-centric organizational model, to a cause-centric one.

The discussion explored three interrelated topics: the incentive model for human rights work in the Internet Freedom space; which challenges related to activity incentives could be identified; and how civil society can work together with progressive donors to find solutions to identified challenges.



Google hands out free advanced protection kits to RightsCon participants

Privacy and Data Protection

Ten days before the EU GDPR becomes applicable: are you ready?

[Access Now](#)

On May 25, 2018, the European Union General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) became applicable. This law sets new rules and obligations for companies collecting, using, selling, sharing, and storing personal information from people living in the European Union.

Almost seven years after the launch of the negotiations on this law, several questions remain: are companies ready to comply with it? Are users aware of their rights and how to exercise them? How did the EU implement the law? Are data protection authorities (DPAs) ready and equipped to enforce the rules? This session explored these issues in a dynamic format where the audience heard from a company, DPA, and representatives of civil society about the opportunities and challenges brought by this law.

The surveillance tool we love to carry: Cell phones searches and privacy in the evolving legal landscape

[Canadian Civil Liberties Association](#)

Cell phones are increasingly becoming ubiquitous tools for participating in contemporary societies around the globe. We use them to communicate by

voice, and increasingly by text. They help us keep information at our fingertips, including intimate details about our relationships, activities, and transactions. They help us navigate our physical environment with mapping tools and GPS. And in the process, they create a treasure-trove of personal information about us and those we are connected to, while facilitating real-time and after-the-fact tracking and surveillance of our movements, online and off.

But while both the technology and social norms are developing rapidly, the laws that protect our privacy in relation to cell phones are not. Courts are increasingly struggling with cases that involve privacy not just in the personal information we store on the phones, but also the information about us that the phones collect and transmit by virtue of the way they are designed and the infrastructures they must interact with to function. In Canada, the Supreme Court recently ruled in the combined cases of *R. v. Marakah* and *R. v. Jones*, establishing some privacy rights in text messages once they are sent. In the U.S., the U.S. Supreme Court has now examined in *Carpenter v. the United States* whether police should be able to obtain detailed tracking information, collected routinely by service providers, without a warrant. On both sides of the Canadian/U.S. border, warrantless searches by border officers are being challenged on constitutional grounds.

This public roundtable session engaged a mix of legal professionals, activists and advocates, and technologists in a guided discussion about the legal issues, ways to engage in the kinds of advocacy that might help shape privacy-protective outcomes, and ways that technology can help solve the problems it has created. The session ultimately created a new, cross-border shared understanding of commonalities

and differences in current approaches to cell phone privacy and legal advocacy, established ongoing relationships that could, where appropriate, lead to shared interventions in key cases in the form of amicus briefs, and engaged and built relationships with non-legal stakeholders whose support can contribute to the advocacy efforts for legal reform, and the efforts to establish new precedents for the digital age.

Responsible Business, Transparency, and Accountability

Human rights due diligence in telecommunications: is the current practice the good practice?

Nokia Group

The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights indicate that businesses should carry out due diligence in order to identify, prevent, mitigate, and account for how they address human rights impacts. Over the past year, telecommunications companies have begun to publish more detailed information about their approach to human rights due diligence, with some even publishing full impact assessment reports.

This interactive discussion reviewed some of the lessons that telecommunications companies have learned from conducting due diligence. Panelists sought consensus on good practices and explored whether current practice is consistent with stakeholder expectations. Questions addressed included: When is the right time to conduct a human rights impact assessment? When should a company use external experts to conduct due diligence, and when will internal resources suffice? How can due diligence be effectively built into a company's day-to-day operations? What are some of the lessons learned in recent human rights due diligence activities?

Documenting ICT companies' impact on civic freedoms & human rights defenders

Ranking Digital Rights

When internet, mobile, and telecommunications companies fail to put in place human rights-respecting commitments and policies, their practices may directly or indirectly result in the violation of users' freedom of expression and privacy rights. These violations in turn intensify the global attack by governments and populist demagogues, and non-state actors, including companies, against human rights defenders and journalists. Highlighting this human impact of company policies and practices is crucial in making the case for why companies must institute—and policymakers should support—policies that foster and reinforce respect for internet users' rights. Although stories of such violations sometimes make the news, until recently there were no

systematic efforts to gather evidence in a way that helps all stakeholders better understand the scale and impact of the abuses and attacks.

This session examined first, how the digital rights community can work together to improve the way that we document the impact of ICT company policies and practices on freedom of expression and privacy, and second, how improved documentation of cases of negative impact may help stakeholders work with companies and governments to improve grievance and remedy mechanisms for internet users, and specifically human rights defenders, whose rights have been violated.



Stopping the Hate and Harassment Online

Eye of the Beholder: Government Attempts to Define and Detect “Extremism”

Human Rights Watch

By presenting trends and risks from around the world arising from government efforts to define and detect “extremism,” this panel invited audience members to think open-mindedly about what their own societies may currently or someday characterize as “extremist,” as well as the concomitant risks to civil and political rights. In doing so, participants stepped back from the question of what companies should be doing to detect and counter certain behaviors or speech, and created an opportunity to refocus on the motivations, definitions, and tactics of governments, with a sensitivity to broader historical and social contexts.

The session also aimed to identify new trends in government uses of surveillance and AI/algorithms to detect so-called “extremists,” by examining specific examples already being implemented. Panelists engaged in a moderated discussion of concepts of “extremism” and resulting surveillance or similar measures from around the world. Participants shared experiences and viewpoints as part of an interactive discussion. To conclude, the session discussed ideas about how to investigate and challenge government measures in this area.



Reclaiming Her Voice: Practical Solutions to Online Violence Against Women in Politics and Journalism

National Democratic Institute and the Committee to Project Journalists

This session was an interactive, solutions-oriented panel discussion about strategies for understanding and effectively combating online violence against women in public life – particularly journalists and women in politics. Harassment and other types of violence against women online affects women in journalism and politically active women alike, and manifests in a variety of forms on almost every online platform available. Indeed, the media’s slow response to harassment of women within their own industry has arguably led to an inability to appropriately deal with the harassment of other women online – including politically active women.

For both women in politics and in journalism, there is often a lack of infrastructure – be it within political parties, from social media platforms, or on the part of media organizations – to address harassment and combat the problem of violence online. This can result in a chilling effect for women online, including through choosing not to participate in leadership or political debates, re-evaluating the types of journalistic beats they cover, deactivating or permanently deleting their online accounts, or even leaving their profession entirely. The resulting limitation of both the number of women able to participate and the range of issues discussed in politics and the media poses a fundamental challenge to democracy, progress towards gender equality and women’s empowerment, as well as to the integrity of the information space.

The panel engaged experts across multiple sectors including civic technology, gender equality, and democracy and governance to discuss methods for building international understanding of this issue and identifying strategies for combating it. It also included tangible examples from women in these sectors who have experienced this type of violence.

This session worked to raise awareness of the prevalence and anti-democratic impacts of online violence against women in politics and in journalism, and to foster knowledge- and idea-sharing among panelists and audience participants of the strategies for understanding, documenting, and combating this type of online violence, to emerge with tangible takeaways and a framework for thinking about best practices to combat online violence across sectors.



Cindy Cohn, Executive Director of the Electronic Frontier Foundation, delivers a talk

The State of Civil Society and Digital Rights

Smart Cities, Smart Decisions: the personal data of smart city citizens

Centre for International Governance Innovation

This session brought together panelists from the public sector, private sector, and academia to discuss the privacy and data implications of smart cities and smart quarters, as Canada kicks off its Smart Cities Challenge and Toronto is poised to develop a smart neighborhood in the heart of the city. Smart cities function on sensors and the Internet of Things, collecting not only environmental data but also the personal data of individuals to interact or even walk through the space. The parameters of data collection and use are not always explicitly explained, meaning that individuals are not likely aware of what their collected data is being used for. This can have serious implications for individuals' privacy rights in the name of innovation. The session explored the balance for privacy and data interests on one hand, and innovation for the purpose of improving lives within the smart city paradigm on the other.

This panel shed light on the practical issues and implications of leaving a data trail, even unintentionally, while also participating in a project that will generate tremendous amounts of data to the private and public sectors for the purpose of making life more sustainable, environmentally friendly, and technologically advanced. The discussion elicited thought-provoking issues related to the value of personal data for companies, the government, and for the individual, and explored whether it is possible to collect data without identifying an individual and whether privacy and data collection regulation can mitigate the pitfalls of living in a connected and interconnected world.

Civil society under assault online: Threats, opportunities, and stories from across the regions

Counterpart International

Activists from Sri Lanka, Ukraine, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe shared compelling stories of their work to advance an internet that respects fundamental rights, and is an inclusive, participatory democratic space.

In Sri Lanka, our partner reflected on an extensive research project underway documenting how gender-based violence (GBV) in a historically patriarchal society plays itself out both online and off, and what this means for advancing gender equality and safety online.

In Ukraine, a "hybrid war" war with Russia (both cyber and traditional arms) has raised serious concerns about what types of content should be blocked as "anti-Ukrainian" and when these policies begin to infringe on legitimate political speech.

In Venezuela, the government has steadily eroded online freedom, closing off space for independent journalism, and has engaged in deliberate network disruptions, seriously jeopardizing rights to internet access. Participants shared findings from ongoing national network measurements and how access and speed are being used to stifle fundamental rights.

In Zimbabwe, a proposed omnibus cyber bill threatens fundamental rights in a year when presidential elections are set to occur, and participants discussed the legacy of internet shutdowns and harassment of activists.

These stories generated a conversation among the audience members to include other countries and creative approaches to activism under similar circumstances.

The Diverse RightsCon Community



Participants respond to questions from Access Now's Executive Director, Brett Solomon, during the closing ceremonies of RightsCon

As a global summit tackling global issues, diversity and inclusion form the guiding principles of our program development and conference planning.

In shaping the agenda on human rights in the digital age, participation from across the world and across communities is critical for building a representative and rights-respecting future. Whether it's stakeholder diversity, regional diversity, gender diversity, or diversity of thought, our highest priority is to ensure a truly inclusive program and community.

This year, we received nearly 800 session proposals from 84 countries across the world, with 52% of session submitters identifying as female. Our program included sessions that introduced, spotlighted, or focused on human rights issues specific to Argentina,

China, Egypt, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar, Nigeria, Palestine, Russia, Syria, Uganda, Ukraine, Vietnam, and many, many other countries and regions.

Our program also included the important perspectives of indigenous people from Canada and globally, from the opening ceremonies, where Chief Stacey Laforme of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation welcomed our community to Toronto and Canada, to a range of program sessions and meetups.

We are also proud to share that our community continues to grow each year, welcoming new participants and becoming even more diverse. This year, our community saw incredible growth: the total number of registered participants grew from 1,518 in RightsCon Brussels to 2,520 in RightsCon Toronto.



in recognition that many don't identify with the traditional gender binary. Accordingly, 94% chose to share their gender identity with us: 48.8% identified as women, 2.1% as trans and gender non-binary, and 43.2% as men.

In celebrating the growth and diversity of our community, it is equally important to recognize those voices that were missing from the conversations, meetings, and program at RightsCon Toronto for varying reasons, including visa refusals and limited funding.

Our decision to move RightsCon in 2018 from San Francisco to Toronto reflected the need for more inclusive spaces for our community. As in previous years, we remain committed to ensuring RightsCon is accessible to as many members of our global community as possible by providing monetary support for travel and accommodation to many grassroots activists. We also increased our support for the visa process by securing the assistance of a pro bono immigration lawyer, hosting visa info sessions, and developing a partnership with the Government of Canada's Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship department.

As we look towards RightsCon Tunis, we are inspired by our growing community and will deepen our commitment towards facilitating diverse and inclusive spaces to meet, discuss, collaborate, and plan.

The total number of countries represented also grew, from 105 countries at RightsCon Brussels to 118 countries at RightsCon Toronto. Similar to trends from previous RightsCon summits, a majority of the participants came from the same region as the host city (with 51% European representation for RightsCon Brussels and 57% North American representation for RightsCon Toronto). Of all participants, 4.9% came from Asia Pacific and Oceania, 4% from Middle East and North Africa, 6.4% from South Asia and Eurasia, 5.3% from Sub-Saharan Africa, and 6.2% from Latin America.

We saw strong cross-stakeholder engagement at RightsCon Toronto, with 18% participation from the private sector, 50% from civil society, 13.5% from academia, and 7.5% from media and independents.

For the first time ever, a majority of RightsCon Toronto participants identified as female, trans, or gender non-binary, continuing the conference's strong track record on gender parity and representation. As a part of our registration process, we encourage conference participants to share their gender identity with us in their own words,



Launches and Outcomes



RightsCon speaker Dinah PoKempner presents during a session launching the Toronto Declaration

The Toronto Declaration on Equality and Non-Discrimination in Machine Learning

Access Now and Amnesty International launched a declaration on the right to equality and non-discrimination in machine learning at the opening of RightsCon Toronto. The Toronto Declaration addresses the risk of human rights harms associated with machine learning and artificial intelligence technology. It is a statement from the human rights community on the urgent need to address discrimination resulting from the use of machine learning systems.

The Toronto Declaration sets out tangible means of upholding equality and non-discrimination and clarifies the obligations of states and responsibilities of companies to protect human rights in the development and use of machine learning; it further emphasizes the importance of accountability for human rights harms and the importance of access to effective remedy to those who suffer human rights harms in the context of machine learning systems. The Declaration clearly states that as machine learning systems grow in use and capability, it is the role of states and the private sector to hold accountability where equality and other human rights harms arise.

The drafting of the Declaration was led by Amnesty International and Access Now, with input from a committee comprising human rights activists and academics, culminating in a full-day event on Day Zero. Upon launch, the Declaration is endorsed by Human Rights Watch and the Wikimedia Foundation.

The Playbook for Gender Equality in the Digital Age

The Digital Inclusion Lab at Global Affairs Canada launched the Playbook for Gender Equality in the Digital Age at RightsCon, the purpose of which is to put forward a set of best practices for governments, legislators, policy makers, advocates, academics, and human rights defenders alike to support gender equality in digital contexts.

The playbook includes four areas of engagement: access (ensuring equal **access** to technologies and inclusion in the development, adoption, and use of digital technologies), **culture** (overcoming sexist and patriarchal traditions and deconstructing social barriers), **education** (improving education and skills), and **international framework** (creating an international framework for gender equality fit for the digital age).

First-ever United Nations report examining regulation of user-generated online content

On day two of RightsCon, David Kaye, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, previewed the first-ever UN report examining the regulation of user-generated online content.

The report includes several recommendations to states in creating an enabling environment for online freedom of expression and to companies in applying human rights standards at all stages of their operations. According to the report, both companies and states should pursue radically improved transparency to ensure user autonomy as individuals increasingly exercise fundamental rights online.

Introducing the Global Internet Sentiment Survey

In partnership with RIWI, a Toronto-based technology firm, Access Now announced a new project: the Global Internet Sentiment Survey (GISS). The project was born out of an identified need to better understand how people around the world think about and engage with the internet, especially given its increasingly prominent role in many of our lives.

Over the course of April 2018, using RIWI's proprietary survey technology, GISS did a preliminary polling of internet users in 10 countries, gathering the opinions of more than 30,000 people around the world through eight questions on three key issues in our community's work: access, safety, and trust.

Highlights of the initial findings were presented in the RightsCon opening ceremonies, including responses to: do you believe you have a fundamental right to access the internet? (86% yes, 14% no), do you feel safe sharing your views online? (30% yes, 31% somewhat, 39% no), do you trust the information you read and consume online? (20% yes, 61% depends, 19% no).

At RightsCon, this information served to spark important conversations and encouraged participants to think more deeply about how the public perceives the internet, as well as how they represent, communicate with, and integrate the insights of the communities they work with. GISS will release a report and information on future iterations of the survey ahead of RightsCon Tunis.



Coalition to demand parity, transparency, and accountability from Facebook in the Global South

Activists and technologists representing Myanmar, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, India, Syria, Philippines, and Ethiopia came together to form a new coalition fighting for parity, transparency, and accountability from Facebook in non-Western markets.

The coalition was formed at RightsCon in response to the lack of adequate Global South representation - particularly from their most vulnerable minorities - in critical discussions about Facebook's power and responsibilities. According to the coalition's press release, countries outside of North America and Europe represent 72% of Facebook's daily users. The coalition stated that in expanding to "emerging markets," Facebook has "consistently failed to invest in the basic contextual understanding, local language skills, and human resources needed to provide a duty-of-care for users in sometimes repressive regimes."

Representatives of the coalition met with Facebook prior to announcing the coalition, calling for the company to take three concrete steps: (1) a public re-commitment to parity of service and enforcement of standards across all countries Facebook operates in; (2) independent third-party human rights audits carried out in each country; and (3) sustained transparency around specific processes and performance benchmarks disaggregated by country and context.

A framework for responsible AI in Consumer Enterprise

Integrate.ai, a Toronto-based Artificial Intelligence firm, launched the first draft of their white paper Responsible AI in Consumer Enterprise at RightsCon. The white paper provides a framework for organizations to operationalize ethics, privacy, and security as they apply machine learning and artificial intelligence.

After soliciting peer review feedback from the RightsCon community, Integrate.ai has officially launched the paper in hopes it will facilitate “a structured conversation about the ethical considerations and broader economic and social impacts of AI data initiatives.” The report includes guiding responsible AI principles, as well as do’s and don’ts for people, processes, and communication. The framework itself breaks down the privacy, security, and ethics considerations at each step of building a machine learning system: (1) problem definition and scope; (2) design; (3) data collection and retention; (4) data processing; (5) model prototyping and quality assurance testing; and (6) deployment, monitoring, and maintenance.

New report on joint statement condemning state-sponsored internet censorship

Thirty governments of the Freedom Online Coalition (FOC) condemned state-sponsored internet censorship in a joint statement at RightsCon Toronto. FOC members include Kenya, Ghana, Mexico, Costa Rica, France, Spain, Tunisia, and the United States of America.

The Joint Statement on Internet Censorship indicates internet censorship refers to all “state-driven content restriction, moderation, or manipulation online when it is in violation of international human rights law.”

The FOC emphasizes the importance of a multistakeholder approach - with governments, the private sector, international organizations, civil society, and internet stakeholders - in evaluating, responding to, and remedying state-sponsored efforts to “restrict, moderate, or manipulate online content.” Furthermore, they call for greater transparency from the private sector on policies surrounding mediation, automation, and remediation.

COST: A better way to measure the cost of internet shutdowns, mobile data blackouts, and social media restrictions

NetBlocks presented its new technology project, the Cost of Shutdown Tool (COST), in collaboration with the Internet Society, at RightsCon Toronto. The tool was launched during the RightsCon session, Combatting Shutdowns with COST: A Data Driven Policy Tool for Internet Freedom, and will better measure the cost of internet shutdowns, mobile data blackouts, and social media restrictions.

According to NetBlocks, economic arguments have already proven to be a powerful tool to combat shutdowns in contexts where freedom of expression

and other fundamental human rights are too often ignored. Previous reports estimate that in 2016 internet shutdowns globally cost \$2.4 billion. COST seeks to automate the cumbersome process behind obtaining and producing economic estimates by creating a platform where the user will only need to select their geographic region, the impacted services, and the duration of the incident. COST is set to launch officially in September 2018.

The MENA Corporate Accountability Front

During a private meetup at RightsCon, civil society organizations working in the Middle East and North Africa region launched the MENA Corporate Accountability Front in order to better collaborate on and respond to corporate abuses infringing on human rights in the digital age.

The CIGI-Ipsos Global Survey on Internet Security and Trust

The Centre for International Governance Innovation launched the fourth iteration of the CIGI-Ipsos Global Survey on Internet Security and Trust, which surveys more than 24,000 users in 25 countries on their perceptions of online privacy, free expression, corporate data practices, and trust in governments and private corporations.

This year’s survey found that globally, more than half (52%) of internet users are more concerned about their privacy than they were a year ago. Additionally, a majority of those surveyed experience a high-level of distrust of social media platforms, search engines, and internet technology, claiming they have far too much power.

A UX checklist for digital security and privacy protection

UX leaders from across the community came together at RightsCon Toronto to build and launch the Digital Security and Privacy Protection UX Principles checklist for those developing technologies to help communities at risk. The checklist, which was started at RightsCon Brussels, promotes human rights-centered design integration into the development of tools, platforms, and services.

The checklist identifies concerns and considerations that promote digital security and privacy for the targeted users. It covers three phases: (1) research and ideation, (2) prototyping and building, and (3) release and feedback.

RightsCon Day 0: Affiliated and Satellite Events



Participants of the Just Net Coalition satellite event discuss what's next for social movements in breakout groups

RightsCon Young Leaders Summit

Building from the first Youth4Rights event at RightsCon Brussels, this year we launched the official RightsCon Young Leaders Summit. A one-day satellite event, the Young Leaders Summit was created to empower young people to join and lead policy and advocacy discussions around human rights in the digital age. Over 50 young people from across Canada and around the world came together for the summit's two tracks: young shapers and young leaders.

The young leaders track was designed for students and emerging professionals interested in learning about and entering the digital rights space. Representatives from Global Affairs Canada, ICANN, Access Now, and Facebook led seminars on emerging issues in the space: responsible business, freedom of expression and online hate, digital security, campaigning and advocacy, and global connectivity.

The young shapers track offered those already active and working in the space - for companies, organizations, and governments - the opportunity to connect and discuss present challenges and future opportunities. After a facilitated session on the role of young people in the space, participants broke into groups to deep dive into more specific case studies, including navigating the legal aspects of technology, censorship, and making technology accessible to policymakers.

Together, the two tracks signal the importance of investing in young people and integrating them into decision-making processes. This first iteration of the

Young Leaders Summit will provide the foundation for an ongoing network of young people within the RightsCon community.

Contending with the digital horizon: What next for social movements?

Hosted by Just Net Coalition (JNC), the event Contending with the digital horizon: What next for social movements? was hosted on Day Zero of Rightscon. It convened a space for representatives of social movements - focused on social, economic, and cultural rights - to speak about their experiences and emerging insights on the "digital revolution."

Ethical Duties in the Digital Age: Encryption done dirt cheap

At RightsCon Toronto, Access Now offered its first Continuing Legal Education (CLE) and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) course. Attorneys participating in RightsCon Toronto were able to attend the course, which was CLE-approved by the California State Bar Association and CPD-accredited by the Law Society of Ontario.

The course was led by Sarah McKune (Senior Legal Advisor, Citizen Lab), Peter Micek (General Counsel, Access Now), and David Huerta (Digital Security Fellow, Freedom of the Press Foundation). The workshop was an interactive opportunity for lawyers to learn about the importance of encryption and data security strategies to help protect confidential information.

Testimonials from the RightsCon Community



"RightsCon is an exceptionally important conference. There are clearly so many people around the world focused on issues related to human rights online, other digital rights online, net neutrality, fair copyright, privacy, the list goes on and on. We haven't really had a place to bring all of those people together, to share experiences, to network, to learn the latest developments, and to strategize. I think RightsCon has really filled a critical gap and is playing a critical role in ensuring the community has a space to come together."

Michael Geist,
Professor, University of Ottawa



"We need civil society all over the world to work with government to make sure that as the internet expands, we have a rights-respecting framework that promotes expression and promotes speech and allows us to come together. And it's events like this - that allow the global network and the regional networks and the local networks to come together and learn from each other - that are imperative to creating that ecosystem and creating that future."

Kat Duffy,
Vice President of Global Technology Programs, Internews



"There are other events out there of various sorts. But this one is increasingly seen as the most important event to come to."

Ron Deibert,
Director, Citizen Lab



"I think if people are able to share resources and share experiences literally from all over the world, then it enriches everyone else's work. You leave here able to do a lot more than when you came in, you leave spaces for serendipity to happen ... if you're talking 2,000 people, that's an infinite amount of connections that can be made."

Dalia Hashim,
Policy Advisor, Open Government Office at Ontario Treasury Board Secretariat



"It's about community. It is such an important part. If you're working in civil society, sometimes you're working in a small office. It can feel very isolating, you don't have the resources you need. You come together in a group like this and you realize you're part of a global community, a global movement of people who are fighting for human rights online.... you're part of something bigger."

Duncan Pike,
Canadian free expression advocate



"I mean where have you been if you haven't been to RightsCon! This is where you get to do the real work ... you can see from my face it's fun to be at RightsCon. It's where you get to meet people who you can mentor, who want to do what you're doing, where you can meet people who have done what you're trying to do, who can mentor you, and it's where you can meet your peers, so you know you're not the only crazy person who wants to save the world."

'Gbénga Sésan,
Executive Direct, Paradigm Initiative



“Something about the coming together of all of us and the insight from the various perspectives that we have, it’s deeply valuable. It’s like coming home.”

Donna Baranski-Walker,
Founder and Executive Director, Rebuilding Alliances



“I must say I’m amazed. It’s enormous. It gathers people from the NGOs, academics, private sector - a convergence and divergence of all these people.”

Isabelle Falque-Pierrotin,
Chair and President of the CNIL



“For us in Venezuela, I think it’s very important to be in RightsCon because we can engage with the technology community and the people working worldwide on human rights. In here, we can have an update on what is happening in the tech world and all the tools we can use in Venezuela to keep our work going. I think it’s very important, all the connections we made here and all the people willing to help you do the work on the web without being blocked by the government.”

Melanio Escobar,
Founder, Redesayuda

Looking toward RightsCon Tunis



Access Now is proud to bring the eighth installment of RightsCon to Tunis, Tunisia. This will be the first RightsCon summit in Africa and the Middle East. Tunisian civil society has done incredible work to build and defend a rights-respecting democracy, and Tunisians are still fighting daily to protect the essential rights of privacy and freedom of speech. Hard-fought victories in Tunisia have been a beacon of hope for others across the region and the world - but there is still work left to do.

Over the next year, many of us will be hard at work defending the integrity of elections, combating disinformation, threats to digital security, censorship that silences critical voices and obscures access to information, and data mining used to target users on a massive scale. We will be working to hold tech companies accountable for their impact on human rights and our democratic processes, and to solidify global recognition and realization of the right to internet access for all communities. These issues are a small selection of what's to come at RightsCon Tunis 2019.



Access Now defends and extends the digital rights of users at risk around the world. By combining direct technical support, comprehensive policy engagement, global advocacy, grassroots grantmaking, and convenings such as RightsCon, we fight for human rights in the digital age.

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