

DC on Internet Rights and Principles

Workshop Room 10
Day 2, IGF2016

This meeting marked seven years since of the [Internet Rights and Principles Dynamic Coalition \(IRPC\)](#) and the collaborative work on the IRPC [Charter of Human Rights and Principles for the Internet](#), a document which is now firmly grounded as a working document translated into 9 different languages and used across different stakeholders and around the world to make a clear impact in human rights advocacy for the Internet. Considering that human rights should apply online as they do offline ([UNHRC 2014](#)), now is the time for concrete discussion on the roles and responsibilities of online service providers and regulators to ensure that human rights are protected and fulfilled in the online environment. This meeting provided an opportunity to discuss local human rights issues and to work on concrete solutions that will protect human rights online.

The first half of the meeting was a roundtable discussion co-organised by Amnesty International. It assembled members of the IRPC, invited Human Rights experts and activists and online services providers representatives to cover issues such as cyber harassment and other emerging forms of techno-censorship - in particular the growing trend in orchestrated troll networks on Twitter. It discussed how online service providers, regulators and civil society can manage these threats to ensure the protection of human rights online. The meeting rounded off with the IRPC's Business Meeting.

Roundtable Discussion: IRPC with Amnesty International

"When Death Threats Go Viral: Defending Human Rights in the Face of Orchestrated Harassment Campaign on Social Media"

Panel

- Tanya O'Carroll, *Amnesty International*
- Alberto Escorcio, Blogger, *Yo Soy Red*
- Paulina Gutierrez, *Article 19*
- Amalia Toledo, *Karisma Foundation*
- Marcel Leonardi, *Google*
- Hanane Boujemi, *IRPC*

Moderator

Marianne Franklin, *IRPC*

Rapporteur

Isadora Hellegren, *GigaNet*

The panel focused on the very concerning trend in Mexico of orchestrated online harassment in Mexico, which is also emerging in other countries around the world. We

explored the problem and what can be done about it, looking at the role of social media companies in particular taking in protecting individuals online. The panel also discussed the difficulties involved for online service providers to protect people without infringing on rights of freedom of expression, including ethical, technical, and legal aspects of the issue. The rest of the session was an exchange of experiences and knowledge about how to respond to, and support those activists and citizens who are at risk online by the use of these tools.

Tanya O'Carroll – Amnesty International:

Civil society actors and regulators struggle to understand the new trend of “massive orchestrated misinformation” campaigns that is occurring in Mexico and other parts of the world. The meaning of the term troll is no longer the same, as there has been a process of commercialization of defamation. Small PR companies have sprung up in Mexico where they are selling their services. They are PR machines spreading fake news and seeding scandals about prominent voices in civil society and human rights advocates. This does not only have a chilling effect for reporting but makes it dangerous to be a journalist. This has long been the case in the offline environment, but has now been transported to the online environment, where journalist no longer consider themselves engaging in self-censorship, but in self protection. When we see this happening, we can report it to Twitter. But defamation is harder to “put a finger on”.

The example of the leaked phone calls of a prominent human rights activist that portray him using racial slurs made trolls on twitter go wild. This was employed as a huge distraction tactic for other cases that he was working on and happens every day in Mexico, Russia, Turkey, and probably during the Trump election in the United States. This has huge chilling effects for freedom of expression

Alberto Escorcio, *Yo Soy Red*:

Alberto presents on techno censorship and where these practices are taking place in Mexico.

People have been organizing online since 2009. Mobilizing and organizing on online media platforms using hashtags has become a crucial and is now the main way that people organize.

In 2012 organizers were using complex tactics to fight back the 30,000 bots, appearing like real people instead of spam bots that were obstructing their organization
In 2014 Mexico bought Finfisher taking back control over social networks.
Then the attackers strategies evolved, and they engaged in massive attacks, sending images of dead people and death threats to organizers. Following the Trum election, this is likely to now start happening all around the world, such as in China and Russia, where we will see them more and more.

This is not just an issue on the Internet. There are examples of bots trying to sabotage and suppress protests online as people express discontent with the President of Mexico's visit to London in 2013.

Tactics have now evolved to include mixture of bots and real people. Organic networks using hashtags have adapted when attacked, by changing their hashtags. This was in 2014, when we still thought we could win the battle by adapting. In 2015 the threats moved to the streets starting with first online threats then physical threats. Of course we will keep adapting, but we need everyone around the world to be aware.

Paulina Gutierrez (Article 19):

Mexico civil society organizations employ a public statement. They seek to maximize human rights as there is increased violation of women and murder of 99 journalists. This is happening in complete impunity: With 30 cases in 2015, particularly malware offenses attacking journalists and human rights defenders, especially against women. We are now documenting them. As civil society, we need to build technological capacity, but we also need prosecution to be effective. Prosecutors think that online threats and attacks are not important. Article 19 believes that a death threat or rape threat that is becoming viral, is no less a threat.

Amalia Toledo (Karisma Foundation Columbia):

Columbia shares the problem of impunity and a high level of violence against human rights defenders like Mexico, but we have been in armed conflict for 50 years. In big cities, conflict is still alive.

Internet connection is very different depending on where you are in country. The situation is different from Mexico, as we have not identified these trends with trolls. Last election, however, a presidential candidate used services of hackers to influence public opinion, so in a few months we will probably see the same things. If happening in one Latin American country, it is likely it will happen in the other.

The armed conflict is affecting Human Rights activists and journalists, but now it is less towards journalists than what is happening in Mexico. This year more than 60 human rights defenders have been killed – violence against human rights activists is increasing while violence against journalists decreasing.

In areas of armed conflict, penetration of internet is low, so we can not blame the Internet. Activists cannot use the internet to organize, but those who do are more vulnerable, because they are not aware of the risks. The threat against female journalists is much higher than against men. When a woman is critical towards the state, “she will be slaughtered online”.

Marcel Leonardi (Google Public Policy Brazil):

Google now offers [Project Shield](#) to protect individuals from DDoS attacks. But there is also an issue of self-censorship. Lawsuits against the same journalist/twitter account can bury person under legal costs. Google is therefore now starting to give support to organizations helping in these legal battles.

THEMES EMERGING FROM COMMENTS FROM THE FLOOR:

- Columbia use of radio to spread misinformation (Columbia)
- Use of self censorship in Nepal (Nepal)
- Internet no longer separate from physical world, same issues but more challenging (Glasgow)
- Sophisticated strategies – “glocalization”
- Accountability: who is legally accountable vs. who is, in effect, actually held accountable?
- Responsibility of business models: Click farms and troll farms
- Users not much power

SUGGESTIONS:

- Prepare guidelines for private citizens on how to identify attacks (Ex. Mexico’s relationship to the state is difficult, drug cartels are killing journalists and go on with impunity)
- Principles help set framework, but need for strategies to make them concrete and applicable.
- Cultural and national variations need to be taken into account.
- Because attacks are sophisticated, complex, and diverse, the response needs to be sophisticated, complex, and diverse.
- Need to translate/transform principles to make them accessible to people that are not human rights defenders or journalists.
- Need a platform.
- Need to be critical of suggestions of regulations.

FINAL REMARKS FROM PANELLISTS

Marcel:

As a commercial enterprise Google has changed how advertising can be shown, avenue been cut off. Since they live off of clicks, that is one way of stopping them. There is “no magic bullet” (among tech solutions). Google makes hundreds of changes to search algorithms trying to identify these issues.

Tanya:

Twitter’s anti harassment strategies work on spambots but not on trolls. Twitter does not want to be judges of who is a troll. Roberto has the expertise to identify them (Mexico complex) but can Twitter ever have that expertise? It is difficult to identify actors – only

partial view of network. We need access to data to expose the actors behind – governments should come together

Amalia:

Should focus more on Human Rights issues.

The Moderator brought this first part of the meeting to a close.

In the last part, the Co-Chair of the IRPC - Hanane Boujemi, introduced the DC and the work it has been doing over the last year and other events at this IGF – the DC Main Session and the IRPC Charter Study Guide project: the Lightning Panel on the question “What has internet governance got to do with refugees?”

Summing up, the co-Chair noted that the DC is a global network, and the Charter work needs continued translating into different cultural languages, so we must bring in different perspectives.

Call for participation:

Seeking a new co-chair and steering committee members – more news on the upcoming election are on the IRPC mailing list at

<https://lists.internetrightsandprinciples.org/mailman/listinfo/irp>