

The Positive Power of Social Media and Internet As Tools For Democracy

Liberal Internationals kongress, Manila 2011

Recalling

- that the 1997 Oxford Manifesto mentions extending democracy as one of the greatest challenges
- the resolution adopted by the 56th Congress of Liberal International in Cairo on the citizens' right to privacy and free communication and various other resolutions on the freedom of expression.
- that suppression of independent thought by filtering, monitoring and censoring of social media constitutes a violation of Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Recognizes

- important role that social media such as Facebook and Twitter and other information networks have played in the events in the middle east and north Africa, such as the 6 April youth movement in Egypt that started as a Facebook group. Without social media it would have been much harder to oust the dictatorial regimes in Egypt and Tunisia.
- that the Internet has the potential to foster a strong and influential civil society under oppressive regimes.
- that social media have given the most marginalized groups a voice and a place to express themselves and that these groups use social media to organize victims of torture, support political dissidents, raise awareness about sexual harassment, expose corruption etc.
- that, whereas undemocratic regimes have over and over clamped down on the free media, social media have managed to keep citizens informed and inspired thousands to claim their freedom. As access to internet is still on the rise, the power of social media will grow accordingly.
- That curbing access to social media limits the freedom of expression and therefore must be seen as a violation of human rights.

Notes

- with concern that governments increasingly have the tendency to control and limit access to social media, for example by using internet filters and blocking websites. That the discussions on Internet censorship are also taking place in several western democracies, including the European Union.
- with concern that authoritarian regimes around the world have taken action against prominent bloggers who have given voice to the opposition. Bloggers and social media activists in various countries have been intimidated, beaten up, arrested and imprisoned without charge.

Liberal International Congress calls upon

- its member organizations to safeguard the freedom of expression as stated in the UN declaration on Human Rights
- companies worldwide to refrain from selling soft- and hardware that is specifically designed to be used for these purposes to regimes that may use them to limit access to the internet.

- its member organizations to be involved in promoting and protecting the freedom of the Internet worldwide,
- its member organisations to encourage their respective governments to put in place legislation, prohibiting companies not to export technologies to unfree countries designed to be used for suppression or censorship around or on the internet
- Liberals, national governments, internet providers, international organizations and NGO's worldwide to treat access to internet and social media or alternative publishing channels as a priority matter for the cause of freedom and democracy.
- national governments to provide support mechanisms and tools for human rights and democracy activists in authoritarian countries that offers them safe and universal access to internet and social media, for example by allowing
- such access at embassies and consulates within the respective authoritarian countries.
- Its member organizations to oppose any forms of state censorship on the Internet