

Joint Statement Presented at the 58th Session of the UN Human Rights Council

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Statement on behalf of the undersigned Members of the Freedom Online Coalition

The Freedom Online Coalition (FOC) is a group of countries committed to advancing cross-regional diplomacy to support Internet freedom and promote and protect human rights online worldwide. The FOC emphasizes that the human rights that individuals enjoy offline should also be protected online.

Undersigned Freedom Online Coalition Members express deep concern about the deteriorating situation of Internet freedom globally. According to the Freedom on the Net report, compiled by Freedom House, global Internet freedom declined for the 14th consecutive year in 2024. Freedom of expression online was imperiled globally, including by the criminalization of speech, such as imprisonment, which results in self-censorship and suppression of dissident speech in many parts of the world. In a number of countries, Internet users, including many human rights defenders, faced arrest for nonviolent expression, at times leading to prison sentences exceeding 10 years. Internet shutdowns and reprisals for online speech created even more perilous environments for people affected by several major armed conflicts around the world.¹

The Freedom Online Coalition expresses deep concern over the growing and persistent trend of intentional state-sponsored disruptions of access to or dissemination of information online. Generally, Internet shutdowns restrict human rights. We strongly condemn intentional measures taken by States to undermine a global, free, open, secure, and interoperable Internet and digital communications platforms through censorship, shutdowns and network disruptions. This also includes electoral periods, where Internet shutdowns threaten the legitimacy of the electoral process by obstructing the free flow of information^{2 3} We also urge action to mitigate potential risks of exclusion, discrimination, surveillance, and privacy violations. In line with international human rights law obligations, we call on states to address misinformation and the spread of disinformation that affect the enjoyment of human rights by all by discrimination, hostility and violence, as well as spreading hatred, racism, xenophobia, negative stereotyping and stigmatization.

In this regard we also welcome the Human Rights Council resolution [A/HRC/RES/57/29](#) on *Promotion, protection and enjoyment of human rights on the Internet* adopted at the last HRC session, as well as the [Global Digital Compact](#) which called for “an inclusive, open, safe and secure digital space that respects, protects and promotes human rights”, for refraining from Internet shutdowns and measures that target Internet access, and for ensuring accountability and effective remedies in this regard.

The Freedom Online Coalition is committed to finding ways, in partnership with the multistakeholder community, to enhance the global response in addressing these issues.

¹ [Freedom on the Net Report 2024: The Struggle for Trust Online](#)

² [FOC Joint Statement and Accompanying Good Practices for Government on State-Sponsored Network Disruptions](#), 2017

³ [FOC Joint Statement on Internet Shutdowns and Elections](#), 2023

Given the threats and opportunities, the Coalition's priorities this year include:

- Ensuring that human rights remain at the center of digital technologies, including throughout their lifecycle, and the Internet, and protecting and advancing multistakeholder approaches. The Internet must remain global, free, open, secure, and interoperable, and digital technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), must be firmly rooted in human rights.
- Advancing digital inclusion and meaningful access to technologies, which rests upon four key pillars: universal and meaningful connectivity, digital literacy, civic participation, and online safety. Digital divides exacerbate the social and economic chasm, with marginalised communities being most affected.
- Developing cross-regional engagement and dialogue with a diverse range of stakeholders.

We look forward to working together in the Human Rights Council with all states on these priorities to promote and protect human rights online.

Signatories:

Armenia	Germany	Moldova
Australia	Georgia	The Netherlands
Austria	Iceland	New Zealand
Canada	Ireland	Norway
Chile	Italy	Poland
Colombia	Japan	Slovakia
Costa Rica	Republic of Korea	Slovenia
The Czech Republic	Latvia	Spain
Denmark	Lithuania	Sweden
Estonia	Luxembourg	Switzerland
Finland	Republic of Maldives	United Kingdom