Ethics of Internet Freedom Promotion
Welcome to the World of Human Rights:
Please Make Yourself Uncomfortable

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Internet Freedom

Internet freedom tools

- Censorship circumvention
- Online anonymity
- Anti-surveillance

An analogy

Humanitarian aid groups provide **food, shelter, medical care,** to people in conflict zones, in economic poverty, or living under repressive governments.

Internet freedom groups provide **uncensored Internet, online anonymity** to people in conflict zones, in information poverty, or living under repressive governments.

An analogy

Humanitarian aid
groups provide
**food,
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to people in conflict zones, in economic poverty, or living under repressive governments.

➔ Lots of soul-searching about ethics of aid

Internet freedom
groups provide

**uncensored Internet,
online anonymity**

to people in conflict zones, in information poverty, or living under repressive governments.
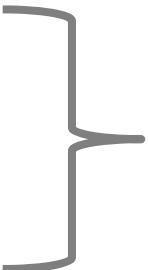➔ ???

Open Internet as Human Right

"Everyone has the right to [...] food, clothing, housing and medical care"

- UDHR (Article 25)

"Everyone has the right to [...] seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers"

- UDHR (Article 19)

Ethics of human rights promotion

- **Impartiality**
- **Impact**
- Consent
- Cultural norms
- ...

In the paper

Impartiality

Impartiality demands giving food, shelter, medical care to those on "both sides" of a conflict

→ Giving supplies to both sides can:
- sustain a conflict
- lead to outcome that is worse for HRs

Should Internet freedom organizations give support to "both sides" in a conflict? Pick sides?

If orgs do pick sides, what is the basis for their decision?

Impact

Measuring impact is important for donors and for self-evaluation.

Orgs often pick metrics that are easy to measure:
- # of bags of food distributed
- $ spent

→ These metrics don't measure *hunger, health, or effectiveness*

How should Internet freedom organizations measure impact?

What does a positive "Internet freedom" outcome look like?

more users ≠ internet freedom

Conclusion

- Internet freedom orgs can draw ethical lessons from human rights orgs
- Places to start:
  - *Journal of Ethics and International Affairs*
  - *Ethical Questions and International NGOs*
  - www.spherehandbook.org