

GRENZENLOSES INTERNET

ZUM WELTTAG GEGEN INTERNETZENSUR AM 12. MÄRZ 2015

REPORTER OHNE GRENZEN ENTSPERRT
9 ZENSIERTE WEBSEITEN IN 11 LÄNDERN



**REPORTER
OHNE GRENZEN**
FÜR INFORMATIONSFREIHEIT

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Feind des Internets / Blockierte Webseite / Gespiegelte Adresse

Russland	http://grani.ru/	https://gr1.global.ssl.fastly.net/
Turkmenistan, Usbekistan und Kasachstan	http://www.fergananews.com/	https://fg1.global.ssl.fastly.net/
Vietnam	http://danlambaovn.blogspot.fr/	https://dlb1.global.ssl.fastly.net/
China	http://www.mingjingnews.com	https://mn1.global.ssl.fastly.net/news/main.htmlnews/main.html
China	http://thetibetpost.com/	https://tp1.global.ssl.fastly.net/
Iran	http://news.gooya.com/	https://gn1.global.ssl.fastly.net/
Kuba	http://www.cihpress.com/	https://hp1.global.ssl.fastly.net/
Bahrain und Saudi-Arabien	http://bahrainmirror.com/	https://bahrainmirror.global.ssl.fastly.net/
Saudi-Arabien und Vereinigte Arabische Emirate	http://www.gc4hr.org/	https://gc1.global.ssl.fastly.net/



UNBLOCKED WEBSITE: GRANI.RU



RUSSIA

Launched in 2000, the Grani.ru news website has carved itself out a unique place in the Russian media landscape, serving as an outlet for talented freelance reporters and commentators and providing a forum for the many civil society groups, human rights defenders and opposition figures who are never seen on the main TV channels.

Grani.ru has also established itself as major source of information on such subjects as free speech violations, the fate of political prisoners and street protests. Its coverage of the Ukrainian crisis has been the polar opposite of the government's propaganda and has not gone unnoticed. It was no surprise when, in March 2014, it became the first media outlet to be blocked under the three-month-old »Lugovoi law«, which allows blocking without reference to a judge if websites are deemed to be »extremist« or »call for participation in unauthorized demonstrations«.

While doing its best to have the blocking recognized as arbitrary, Grani.ru has also made every effort to make its readers aware of the censorship circumvention tools available to them.

<http://grani.ru>

Founded in 2000

Blocked in Russia since 2014

URL of unblocked website: <https://gr1.global.ssl.fastly.net/>

CENSORING COUNTRY: RUSSIA

Still relatively free until recently, the Internet has been brought largely under control since Vladimir Putin's return to the presidency in 2012. The Internet had played a key role in the major protest movement that rocked Russia in the preceding months and the Maidan uprising in Kiev reinforced Kremlin paranoia. Created in 2012 to »protect children«, the blacklist of blocked websites keeps on getting longer. Since 2013, sites deemed to be transmitting »calls to participate in unauthorized demonstrations« can be blocked without a court order. As a result, the news and information websites Grani.ru, EJ.ru and Kasparov.ru were rendered inaccessible three months later. Since the summer of 2014, influential bloggers have to register under their real names and comply with requirements similar to those imposed on the media. And they are now criminally responsible for the comments that visitors post on their sites.

UNBLOCKED WEBSITE: FERGHANA



CENTRAL ASIA

An independent online news agency, Fergannews.com is Central Asia's leading Russian-language news website. The speed of its news coverage, the quality of its analyses and its network of correspondents have made it essential reading. They have also turned it into a prime target for the region's authoritarian governments, especially as it takes a close interest in their many systematic human rights violations.

Also known just as »Ferghana«, it does investigative reporting on such sensitive regional issues as the use of forced labour in cotton production, water resource management and the fate of Central Asian immigrants in Russia. In a region where national, ethnic and religious identity is often exploited to fuel conflicts, it covers these issues in an impartial and responsible manner, actively promoting dialogue and tolerance.

It recently started a blog platform that is used by independent journalists and much of its content is translated into English. Its correspondents in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan take considerable risks because they have to operate clandestinely. The site has long been blocked in these two countries and has been blocked in Kazakhstan as well since 2014. Certain content has also often been filtered out in neighbouring Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

<http://www.fergannews.com/>

Founded in 1998

Blocked in Turkmenistan since 2005, in Uzbekistan since 2007, and in Kazakhstan since 2014

URL of unblocked website: <https://fg1.global.ssl.fastly.net/>

CENSORING COUNTRY: UZBEKISTAN

Ever since the riots in the eastern city of Andijan in 2005, Islam Karimov's autocratic regime has done everything possible to incorporate the Internet into the absolute control it exercises over the traditional media – creating state agencies, passing laws and acquiring cutting-edge technology to ensure that the Internet poses no threat. Since 2011, all commercial Internet Service Providers have to go through state-owned Uztelecom to access the Internet, which makes blocking websites even simpler. Most independent, opposition and human rights sites cannot be accessed in Uzbekistan and do not show up in the national search engine, www.uz. Access to censorship circumvention tools is also blocked. The Commission of Experts on Information and Mass Communications hunts for potentially »negative or destructive« content. And the regime does not

worry about legal niceties when it wants to silence bloggers or online journalists. Several languish in appalling conditions in prison on trumped-up charges of drug trafficking or corruption. Uznews.net, a leading news website based abroad, had to shut down in December 2014 after its editor's email was hacked and confidential information was posted online, putting its correspondents at risk.

CENSORING COUNTRY: TURKMENISTAN

The level of online censorship in Turkmenistan, ranked 178th out of 180 countries in the 2015 press freedom index, is what you would expect from its extremely authoritarian regime. President Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov, who has himself called »Arkagad« (Protective Father), protects his people so well from outside influences that barely 10 percent had access to the Internet in 2013. These pioneers surf a highly censored version dubbed the »Turkmenet« and have to show ID to visit an Internet café. State-owned TurkmenTelekom's monopoly of Internet access makes a connection prohibitively expensive for most people. It also gives the regime full control over online content because TurkmenTelekom owns the only point of access to the World Wide Web and blocks all sites that its masters want censored. The criteria determining what is blocked are secret but they must be very broad because so many sites are inaccessible. They include most independent and foreign news websites and even the main blog platforms. Facebook, Twitter, Gmail and other Internet giants are also often blocked.

CENSORING COUNTRY: KAZAKHSTAN

The Kazakh authorities demonstrated the extent of their know-how during their brutal crackdown on rioting in Zhanaozen in December 2011, when they cut off the region's Internet and telecommunications and filtered Twitter and the leading independent news sites throughout the country. This is now legal. Since April 2014, the government has the power to block any website within hours without a court order. It just has to see »harm to persons, society or the state« or »calls for participation in extremist activities, mass disorder or authorized demonstrations.« In such circumstances, it can also disconnect any network or means of communication. Many independent news websites that used to be subjected to intermittent filtering are now permanently blocked. The totally paranoid authorities systematically shoot the messenger whenever there is bad news. In recent months, they blocked Fergananews.com for mentioning inter-communal clashes in a southern village, Kloop.kg for mentioning the presence of Kazakh children in Islamic State training camps, and Meduza.io for investigating pro-Russian separatism in the north. And critical bloggers are increasingly likely to be jailed for a few days or weeks.

UNBLOCKED WEBSITE: DAN LAM BAO



VIETNAM

In Vietnam, the press is subjected to a system of prior censorship supervised by the propaganda department, while the authorities hound independent bloggers and citizen-journalists, often sentencing them to long jail terms and subjecting them to terrible violence. Despite this persecution, several sites such as Dan Lam Bao continue to defend the public's right to information.

Launched in July 2009 and blocked by the Vietnamese authorities ever since, Dan Lam Bao allows Internet users to share their views freely and offers content of a diverse nature provided by people from all social classes. Its contributors include independent bloggers, traditional media journalists and whistleblowers inside the government.

Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung issued an order in September 2012 accusing Dan Lam Bao of »publishing false, fabricated and mendacious information with the aim of defaming the nation's leaders, stirring up the population against the party and state, provoking doubts and creating bad publicity, thereby undermining the people's trust in the state«. The order asked the public security ministry to investigate and punish anyone affiliated to Dan Lam Bao.

As a result, many contributors post under pseudonyms to avoid arrest or retaliatory harassment of their families.

danlambaovn.blogspot.com

Founded in 2009

Blocked in Vietnam since 2009

URL of unblocked website: <https://dlb1.global.ssl.fastly.net/>

CENSORING COUNTRY: VIETNAM

Vietnam's government tolerates no online political debate and relentlessly gags bloggers and cyber-dissidents who dare to question its legitimacy or policies. Its determination to control online content is reflected not only in its censorship of blogs and social networks but also in its surveillance of citizen-journalists and its judicial harassment of them and their families. Firewalls block independent news sites and blogs, and site owners are often subjected to arrest or a great deal of harassment if content strays from the Communist Party line. Most Internet companies and service providers are state-owned and provide the first level of Internet surveillance, using domain name blocking to silence errant sites. Passwords are often hacked and connections are slowed on days when dissidents are arrested or tried. Mobile Internet browsing is also closely monitored as the state controls the three main operators.

UNBLOCKED WEBSITE: MINGJING NEWS UND TIBET POST INTERNATIONAL



CHINA

Mingjing News

Mingjing News (www.mingjingnews.com) is an independent and participative news website covering Chinese politics, business, social issues and history. It often has information that the Chinese government does not want disclosed and it allows its readers to post a great deal of content, including text reports, photos and video. Its revelations about the government's secret investigation into politburo standing committee member Zhou Yongkang in 2014 were an example of its frequent sensitive reporting that triggers cyber-attacks on the site or other enhanced censorship measures.

The site is owned by Mirror Media, a Chinese media group that was launched in Canada in the 1990s and now has bureaux in the United States, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Ho Pin, the group's founder and the site's editor, has had a long career with Chinese media and is a well-known expert on politics in China. His books about Chinese politics, in which he criticizes political censorship, are banned in China. He publicly condemned journalist Gao Yu's arrest when it was revealed in May 2014.

<http://www.mingjingnews.com>

Founded in 1997

Blocked in China since 1997

URL of unblocked website: <https://mn1.global.ssl.fastly.net/>

Tibet Post International

Founded in December 2007 by a group of Tibetan journalists in exile in Dharamsala, in northern India, Tibet Post International (TPI) is a trilingual news website (English, Tibetan and Mandarin) that aims to promote democracy and free speech within the Tibetan community and to cover human rights violations in China's Tibet Autonomous Region. In December 2012, TPI launched a bimonthly in English that is targeted at the Tibetan community in Dharamsala.

Nowadays, TPI is one of the leading sources of news about Tibet for both the international community and readers inside China, whose numbers have grown steadily although the Chinese authorities block access to the site.

With the help of its network of sources inside China, TPI covers censorship and suppression of freedom of information by the Chinese authorities and often has exclusives about Tibetans who try to inform the outside world about their situation and about police and army attempts to control the flow of information within the region or spy on the population.

Dhondup Wangchen and Jigme Gyatso, two Tibetan citizen-journalists who were arrested for shooting a documentary during the run-up to the Beijing Olympics, received active support from TPI from the time of their arrest in 2008 until Wangchen's release in 2014.

<http://thetibetpost.com/>

Founded in 2007

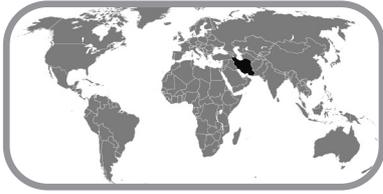
Blocked in China since 2008

URL of unblocked website: <https://tp1.global.ssl.fastly.net>

CENSORING COUNTRY: CHINA

Mass blocking of foreign websites, spying on cyber-dissidents, using social networks for propaganda purposes and »digital bonfires« of Uyghur sites – China continues to have one of the world's most sophisticated systems of Internet surveillance and censorship. Its mechanisms for filtering and monitoring online content are collectively known as the Great Firewall of China. Launched in 2003, it can filter access to foreign sites and block keywords such as »human rights«, »Tiananmen« or »Liu Xiaobo«. Its surveillance mechanisms are integrated into Chinese social networks and chat services such as Sina Weibo and QQ, and even into VoIP. Commercial companies are required to guarantee censorship on their networks. In some parts of the troubled regions of Tibet and Xinjiang, Internet speed is less than half what it is in the major coastal cities. Nonetheless, the rapid growth of the participative Internet and its impact on social and political debate are making the censors' job more and more complicated. An increase in monitoring and persecution of online activists and their methods is symptomatic of the regime's nervousness.

UNBLOCKED WEBSITE: GOOYA NEWS



IRAN

»Pluralism« is the quality that best defines Gooya News, an offshoot of Gooya.com, one of the first and most important Farsi-language online portals. It offers news and analyses by journalists and civil society activists of all political tendencies, and takes content from both the Islamic Republic's official website and opposition sites. It also has a section for the Iranian news coverage of such international media such as BBC Persian, Radio Fara and Radio Zamanaeh.

Because of its pluralism, the Iranian authorities began blocking Gooya News a few years after its creation at the turn of the millennium. In 2009, it played a major role in the protests against President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's reelection, posting documents and photos of demonstrations that the government media were not publishing at the time.

The website's claim to offer »Unbiased Iran News« is a fair assessment of its editorial policies. This editorial independence has a price, of course. Its employees are banned from Iran so the site has to be run from abroad. But it is based on a network of contributors throughout the country.

<http://news.gooya.com/>

Founded in 2000

Blocked in Iran since 2002

URL of unblocked website: <https://gn1.global.ssl.fastly.net/>

CENSORING COUNTRY: IRAN

Although still working towards the creation of a restrictive national or »Halal« Internet, Iran continues to develop its Internet infrastructure for economic reasons. With 49 percent Internet penetration and 36 million Internet users, according to official figures, it is one of the region's most connected countries. And according to Tehran chamber of commerce figures, Iran's imports of mobile phones and IT equipment from China and the United Arab Emirates totalled nearly 4 billion dollars last year (2.3 billion from China and 1.6 billion from UAE). Nonetheless, the authorities block many news sites, mostly those that support the reformists but also conservative ones. The grounds given are often the same – anti-government propaganda, immoral content, attacks on national security or sacrilege. The reasons are above all political and it should not be forgotten that it is easier to access porn sites than independent news sites in Iran. According to the government media, more than 50 online activists are currently detained and 20 are serving sentences ranging from one to eight years in prison. Most of these arrests are carried out by the Revolutionary Guards, with whom the justice system cooperates at Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's bidding.

UNBLOCKED WEBSITE: HABLEMOS PRESS



CUBA

The Cuban government maintains a complete monopoly on news and information and tolerates no independent media aside from a few Catholic magazines. Internet access continues to be restricted because of its prohibitive cost and is tightly controlled.

Founded in 2009, Hablemos Press is an unauthorized independent news agency that covers a range of subjects including human right violations by the authorities. Thanks to its 30 correspondents in Cuba's 15 provinces, it has established itself as a key source of online information about Cuba. Blocked by the government and inaccessible in Cuba since 2011, its website is hosted abroad.

Its journalists and contributors are hounded by the regime. Their equipment is confiscated. Their mobile phones are disconnected. They are summoned by the department for internal security and told to change their editorial policies. Like other independent journalists and bloggers in Cuba, they are exposed to death threats, intimidation, smear campaigns, arrest, arbitrary detention and physical violence. But they continue to work to »reinforce the process of democratization«.

<http://www.cihpress.com>

Founded in 2009

Blocked in Cuba since 2011

URL of unblocked website: <https://hp1.global.ssl.fastly.net/>

CENSORING COUNTRY: CUBA

In Cuba, Internet access is still restricted because of its prohibitive cost and is still closely controlled. Officials often blame the low Internet penetration on the US embargo but this excuse ceased to be valid after the ALBA-1 fibre-optic cable linking Cuba to Venezuela became operational, leaving a political desire to restrict access as the only possible explanation. Independent Cuban journalists and bloggers are rarely read by their compatriots inside Cuba. Slow Internet connections and the risk of hacking make it difficult for them to update their websites in Internet cafés or hotels. They go to embassies to post their stories on websites based abroad. As a result, they are forced to go embassies to post their stories on websites based abroad. They are constantly spied on by the security agents patrolling the street, who harass them with threats of arrest and delete material found on memory cards and USB sticks.

UNBLOCKED WEBSITE: BAHRAIN MIRROR



BAHRAIN UND SAUDI ARABIA

The Bahrain Mirror was launched on 13 May 2011, at the height of a wave of anti-government protests. Its very first editorial explained that it was created to offset the decline in media freedom in Bahrain. The site was blocked a month later.

For the past three years, its staff have been playing a game of cat and mouse with the authorities. The addresses of new mirror sites are often posted on Twitter and Facebook and are just as often blocked. Whether based inside Bahrain or abroad, its journalists all use pseudonyms for safety's sake. Those who have been identified have had to flee abroad. Some have even been stripped of their nationality.

Despite the government's determination to silence it, the Bahrain Mirror has established itself as one of Bahrain's few independent news outlets. As well as its journalistic reporting, the staff have posted many reports about the human rights situation and, from their Beirut headquarters, organize workshops and discussion forums on political and civil society movements in the Gulf.

<http://bahrainmirror.com/>

Founded in 2011

Blocked in Bahrain since 2011

URL of unblocked website: <https://bahrainmirror.global.ssl.fastly.net/>

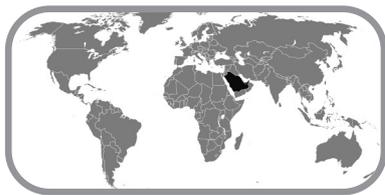
CENSORING COUNTRY: BAHRAIN

Bahrain's Information Affairs Agency has had the power to censor websites since 2002. Posting content that criticizes Islam or the king, or incites violence or the overthrow of the government, is punishable by up to five years in prison. The government's control of the Internet is facilitated by its majority shareholding in the kingdom's leading Internet Service Provider, Batelco, which monitors and filters traffic. Officials cite the need to protect the public from pornography but many sites are targeted for their political content. Since the pro-democracy demonstrations of February 2011, news sites such as Bahrain Mirror and the daily Al-Quds Al-Arabi have been banned for posting articles critical of the government. Online censorship includes going after dissidents. Human rights defender Nabeel Rajab, blogger Ghada Jamsheer and Maryam Al-Khawaja, co-president of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, were all arrested in connection with online posts at the end of 2014.

CENSORING COUNTRY: SAUDI ARABIA

A 2007 cyber-crime law is widely used to silence dissent in Saudi Arabia. Article 6 says: »participating in the production, preparation, circulation or storage of content that undermines public order, religious values, public decency or privacy, by means of information networks or computers (...) is punishable by a prison sentence, fine or other penalty.« It was under this law that blogger Raif Badawi was sentenced in September 2014 to ten years in prison and 1,000 lashes for »insulting Islam«. Since 2011, online media, the websites of traditional media and sites offering audio and video content have to apply to the culture and information ministry for a licence that must be renewed every three years. Applicants must identify themselves and the company hosting their site, and must produce »documents testifying to good conduct«. Forums, blogs, personal websites, distribution lists, online archives and chat services all have to be registered. In February 2014, the authorities added the stipulation that bloggers must use their real identity.

UNBLOCKED WEBSITE: GULF CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS



ARABIAN PENINSULA

The Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR) defends freedom of expression, association and assembly in the Arabian Peninsula and Gulf, understanding this region to encompass Yemen, Oman, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Iran and Iraq. It decided to include Syria in its mandate in 2013 on the grounds that it was vital to document human rights violations in a country whose conflict was having a major impact on its neighbours.

The Centre is not welcome in UAE, where its website has been blocked since its creation in 2011, or in Saudi Arabia, where it has been blocked since December 2014. It is hard to know exactly why the Saudis are censoring it, but the reasons are probably related to its support for Raif Badawi, a Saudi citizen-journalist sentenced to ten years and prison and 1,000 lashes for creating a website called the Liberal Saudi Network.

The GCHR speaks out internationally in defence of the region's journalists and human rights groups. In December 2013, it joined nine other NGOs including Reporters Without Borders in asking UN special rapporteurs Frank La Rue (freedom of opinion and expression) and Juan Méndez (torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment) to investigate the cases of three journalists – Mohamed Les Hassan, Hussain Hubail and Qassim Zain Aldeen – who had been arrested and tortured in Bahrain for covering anti-government protests in 2012 and 2013.

The Centre has offices in Beirut, Copenhagen and Istanbul. Several of its staff have been arrested in Saudi Arabia and are still being held.

Website: Gulf Centre for Human Rights <http://www.gc4hr.org/>

Founded in 2011

Blocked in Saudi Arabia since 2014

URL of unblocked website: <https://gc1.global.ssl.fastly.net/>

CENSORING COUNTRY: SAUDI ARABIA

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CENSORING COUNTRY: UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

In the United Arab Emirates, it is the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority that decides what may or may not be posted online. The list of blocked websites is long, as is the list of grounds for blocking, which include »violating ethics and morality«, »expressing hatred of religion« and posing a »direct or indirect risk to Internet users«. Whether they just report the facts or question the established order, media outlets have little chance of being read within the UAE. And the judicial system does not hesitate to impose heavy sentences when deemed necessary. For tweeting about the mistreatment of detainees, online activist Osama Al-Najjar was sentenced to three years in prison and a heavy fine last November on charges of insulting the state, inciting hatred and violence and spreading false information. He was tortured for four days after being arrested without any explanation in March 2014.