**An Internet free and secure: a human rights approach to cybersecurity policy-making**


The Freedom Online Coalition is a group of governments who have committed to work together to support Internet freedom and protect fundamental human rights worldwide. The coalition supports a Working Group, "An Internet Free and Secure", which is comprised of experts from the private sector and civil society in partnership with member states to bring a human rights framing to ongoing debates on cybersecurity.

Why do we need a human rights based approach to cybersecurity policy-making?  In the public debate about how to provide security in the digital context, the dominant narrative has become increasingly entrenched pitting privacy and other human rights against public safety and national security. In practice, though, threats to privacy and other human rights can also harm public safety and security. This binary framing is therefore damaging to both sides of the equation, and creates antagonisms where mutual reinforcement is possible. Framing privacy and other human rights as antithetical to public safety and national security is not only misleading, but undermines public safety and security, as well as freedom. Raising the profile of human rights protections in existing cybersecurity policy-making is necessary to offset this trend.

In the context of increasing cyber vulnerability, where cybersecurity and cybercrime challenges are increasing in frequency and complexity, there is a need for all stakeholders to work together to preserve human rights, particularly privacy and free expression.  The "An Internet Free and Secure" Working Group (WG) believes very strongly that individual security is a core purpose of cybersecurity and a secure Internet is central to human rights protection in the digital context.   The WG's definition of cybersecurity reinforces that privacy and confidentiality of information are essential to the security of people, as well as to data, especially in the digital context where physical security and digital information are linked.

Cybersecurity and human rights are complementary, mutually reinforcing and interdependent. Both need to be pursued together to effectively promote freedom and security. Recognizing that individual security is at the core of cybersecurity means that protection for human rights should be at the center of cybersecurity policy development. Such an approach is instrumental in reminding policy-makers that cybersecurity must take into account individual security and human rights and that, as a consequence, *cybersecurity policies should be human rights respecting by design*.

The primary task of the working group is to help bring a paradigm shift to cybersecurity so that human rights and cybersecurity are understood to be interdependent and mutually reinforcing.  The challenge facing the Working Group is ***how*** to translate this paradigm shift into action across a diversity of policy spaces and change the conversation on cybersecurity by defining individual security and human rights as the starting point. To do so requires breaking down policy-silo boundaries, dislodging the dominant rights-versus-security paradigm, and building evidence that human rights and cybersecurity are mutually reinforcing and interdependent.

To this end, the Working Group has developed a set of cybersecurity and human rights focused policy recommendations that can be applied in a variety of situations.  These

recommendations build upon and advance existing cybersecurity policy-making efforts while prioritising human rights.  They offer guidance to all stakeholders involved in cybersecurity matters, and in particular those involved in developing and implementing cybersecurity policies and frameworks.

The "Recommendations for Human Rights Based Approaches to Cybersecurity" can be found here: https://www.freedomonlinecoalition.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/FOC-WG1-Recommendations-discussion-draft-IGF-2015-new.pdf

The Working Group's human rights and individual security focused definition of cybersecurity that can be found here:   https://www.freedomonlinecoalition.com/how-we-work/working-groups/working-group-1/blog8/

For more information on the Working Group "An Internet Free and Secure" as well as the list of WG members, visit:  https://www.freedomonlinecoalition.com/how-we-work/working-groups/working-group-1.


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